

35-mile walk raises funds for C.H.E.E.R.S.

By Tracy Folz, Tri County News, May 28, 2020

Mark Puetz, manager of the Strike Zone bowling lanes in New Holstein, set off on a 35-mile walk on Sunday, May 24 to raise funds and bring awareness for C. H. E. E. R. S. Wisconsin, a Tavern League of Wisconsin relief fund.

"During this COVID-19 shutdown, I started walking and pretty soon I was up to 15 miles a day. I thought it would be a great way to raise funds and bring awareness to the struggles the area bars and restaurants are having during this time," Puetz said.

Known as Neuman to his customers and family, Puetz has been on the State Board of the Tavern League of Wisconsin (TLW) for 1-1/2 years and has served as vice president of the Manitowoc chapter for four years. The TLW created the relief fund C. H. E. E. R. S. (Communities Helping Empower Employers to Remain Successful) in April to help their over 5,000 members who are struggling during this shutdown. In a statement from TLW President Chris Marsicano, "Instead of celebrating St. Patrick's Day with a crowded bar and green beer, our members were forced to lock their doors. It was a punch in the gut for the hospitality industry."

These members are usually the ones organizing fundraisers or donating to community events. In 2019, TLW members raised \$15.8 million which was distributed to 42,540 local charities throughout Wisconsin.

Wisconsin taverns and bars employ thousands of people and during the shutdown, most of these employees were forced out of jobs or ended up in the unemployment lines. Even with most restaurants and bars offering take-out food, they are struggling to make ends meet and pay bills. Some have been forced to close completely. The C. H. E. E. R. S. program was created to raise funds to help TLW members be able to open their doors again and to help bridge the gap between the closure and when they are able to reopen. Major contributors include Badger Liquor, Wisconsin Amusement and Music Operators, New Glarus Brewing, S&S Distributing, Inc, Brew Pub Lotza Motza Pizza, Society Insurance, Beechwood Sales and Service and Anheuser-Busch, Midstate Amusement Games, Pehler Brothers Distributing, Forest Floor Foods, Josh Hammond, Matt Dinsmore, Jacqueline Frisch, Scott Stengeer (lobbyist, Tavern League Wisconsin), David Dent, and Pete Madland (executive director, Tavern League of Wisconsin).

Monies will be equally distributed to members in good standing 30 days after the executive order expires.

Neuman started his journey at 8 a. m. on Sunday, May 24 from Strike Zone with a supportive crowd cheering him on and walked 35 miles to Curve In Bar in Kewauskum. He started the walk with his sister, Kim Puetz, who walked 6.6 miles (two hours) with him to start the trip. His fiancée, Ashley Beattie, is following him in a chase vehicle. He was walking back roads and figured that it would take him around 10 hours to complete his journey.

If people would like to make a contribution, they can do so at www.tlw.org or at the Strike Zone. All donations are greatly appreciated, Puetz said.

The Tavern League would also like to start a Safe-Ride program in the area and is looking for area Lyft and Uber drivers who would be willing to team up with them to create this program.



Mark "Neuman" Puetz was about six miles into his walk toward Kewaskum from New Holstein here along with his sister Kim.



Mark "Neuman" Puetz stood behind the bar at the Strike Zone in New Holstein.



Well-wishers gathered outside the Strike Zone early Sunday morning to wish Mark Puetz good luck in his walk to Kewaskum.

Tracy Folz photos