

Walking Among Family

BY KELLY LAURIAT '98

When was the last time you were part of something powerful?

For me that time was three days in May when I, along with thousands of other women and men, walked 60 miles from Fitchburg to Boston in Avon's Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk. Most of those involved had never done something like this before. We were young and old, daughters and grandfathers, from near and far. We all walked in a revolution, in solidarity against breast cancer.

For me, the desire to make a difference was something my family had instilled in me long ago. Whether it was looking up to my mom—who somehow managed to balance a family and a successful career—or my grandmother, who is the definition of independence, I knew I had to give back. Mom always found time to cheer me on at swim meets or to rally fellow Democrats during the 2000 campaign season. Community to her was as important as family. As her daughters (my sister, Sarah Lauriat '94, and I) left the small community of Roxbury, Conn., and the comforts of home to pursue a new challenge—Wheaton College—my mother sent us out with one very important thing: the values of family and community. My parents and our hometown community prepared us for new and exciting challenges.



We met those challenges at college by staying active and making a difference. At Wheaton, my sister and I joined many communities; we both were on the women's swim team, were active in class events, and helped to recruit future Wheaton students. If a student has the motivation and drive, Wheaton was the place where she or he could make a difference and discover his or her impact on their own communities.

In May 2000 my mom lost her eleven-year battle with cancer at the age of 52; still, she continues to influence our lives. Throughout her



Kelly Lauriat celebrates the end of Avon's Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk (above, center) with fellow participants and takes a break en route (below, left).

battle, she fought with such strength, courage and will to live. It was her strength and determination for life that inspired me to walk in the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day. If my mom could battle cancer and all its evils, I could walk 60 miles! As I was out training in the cold New England winter, I quickly discovered that my mom is the wind at my back and the bounce in my step.

As if making a difference in others' lives wasn't enough to make this effort worthwhile, the atmosphere at the Avon 3-Day was spectacular. A mobile city followed the walkers, providing everything we needed—massages, a general store, hot dinners and breakfasts, and hot showers! We walked along some of the most historical trails in the country, following the route the British Army took into Boston during the Revolution. We even took a snapshot on the North Bridge and relaxed on the lawn of The Manse in Concord.

I talked with women who never should have been walking with us, who battled and won their fights against cancer. One gentleman, who was in his 80s, walked in memory of his wife; daughters like me, walked because cancer robbed us of our mothers. We all walked—and gave back—because we can, and because we should.

