

Pinning MS



Fundraiser helps wrestling promoter feel more powerful.

by Kelsey Blackwell



Kellie Bachman (left), with her son, and Roger Bachman (right). Photo courtesy of Roger Bachman

Picking up a guy in the air and slamming him to the mat may not be the first image that comes to mind when considering ways to support multiple sclerosis research, but for Roger Bachman, creator of the Bachman Body Slam, it was a no-brainer. When Bachman's daughter Kellie was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS at the age of 26, she and her family were

devastated.

“You can prepare yourself all you want for a situation like that, but when you finally hear those words, well, it was earthshaking,” Bachman says. “She was really upset and kind of leaning on us [her parents] to give her a positive outlook. We tried to do that as best as we could, but being an emotional person myself, it was difficult to reassure her that everything was going to be all right. It was a rocky road.”

Bachman set out to find something that he and his family could do to feel more powerful.

Bachman is the owner of the Cincinnati-based Northern Wrestling Federation (NWF) and has been a promoter of wrestling shows throughout Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky for 22 years. So finding a way for his passion to support his daughter seemed obvious.



The Bachman Body Slam started in 2015, when Kellie Bachman was diagnosed with MS. Photo courtesy of Roger Bachman

“Throughout the years, we’d done fundraisers for everything from local Little League teams to fire departments—why not MS?” he asks.

The Bachman Body Slam was born in 2015. “We chose that name because it’s about body slamming MS,” Bachman says. “Plus, Bachman is Kellie’s last name so it goes together. She’s been around the wrestling shows since she was a very, very, little girl. She’s grown up, basically, in the Northern Wrestling Federation.”

Throughout the year, the Bachmans sell T-shirts, donating 100 percent of the proceeds to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. In November, fundraising efforts intensify with a raffle and bake sale. The Bachman Body Slam culminates in a “main event” wrestling match, which draws attendees from across Ohio and Kentucky. The reason they come is clear: Besides helping raise funds for MS research, they’re treated to a first-class show. After noshing on homemade baked goods and perhaps entering to win a big-screen TV, participants watch several wrestling matches complete with a baritone-voiced announcer and classic melodramatic storylines key to any wrestling show. Wrestlers from the NWF’s roster intimidate each other and initiate wrestling moves like the brain buster, choke slam, cutter, face buster, neck breaker, and yes, the body slam.

More than 200 fans turned out for the 2017 Bachman Body Slam, cheering on 25 wrestlers who competed in eight matches. The event raised \$1,595, according to Bachman.

“We were very happy with the turnout,” he says. “We are looking forward to participating and helping the Society in any way possible.”

Says Kellie: “I’m so proud of my dad for putting together this event. It’s so incredible to see and feel support, and it gives me such hope that one day this disease will be curable. Until then we will fight, raise money and be hopeful.”

While raising money is the body slam’s primary goal, it’s not the only motivation for the event. “In a selfish way, it just feels good,” Bachman says. “It makes us feel a little bit better about the situation, along with helping to be able to donate money and help with the research.”



After his daughter’s diagnosis, Roger Bachman, a wrestling promoter, stages a tournament to raise money for research and put on a show at the same time. Photo courtesy of Roger Bachman

Feel-good fundraising

That “feel good” is a natural reason to be drawn to the Society’s Do It Yourself Fundraising MS, says Rachael Nuwash, associate vice president of special events for the Society.

“We find that there are a lot of people who are very connected to the cause, either because they live with MS or someone near and dear to them is living with MS, and they want to do something more than just participate in [Society] fundraising events we put on every year. It’s really inspiring to see how people engage.”

Nuwash has seen successful DIY campaigns that range from bake sales and bowling tournaments, to a girls’ brunch with pedicures and mimosas. The most successful, she says, often put the host’s own passions and creativity front and center.

For those inspired to create an event, the Society provides a variety of information, including a link to a DIY participant fundraising page, which includes templates for building your fundraiser page, sample emails for your donation requests and resources for promoting your fundraiser via social media. Society staff members also can help.

“I love to hear about the successes of people like the Bachmans,” Nuwash adds. “It’s that kind of creativity that makes for a lively and exciting event. These gatherings become more than fundraisers, they’re part of people’s lives.”

Kelsey Blackwell is a freelance writer in Berkeley, California.

Learn more about [DIY Fundraising MS](#).