

BIG JOHN

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But perhaps the biggest shock came in the mail when Buoniconti was just 10 years old. "I got a bill in the mail for \$1.2 million for my mother's treatments," he says. Buoniconti, who has participated in charity walks since he was a child, decided to dedicate a larger part of his life to raising money for those affected by the disease. In 2001, Big John's Team was created to raise money for people in Buoniconti's home state of Colorado. But that wasn't enough. "I realized I just wanted to help people in other states," he says. So to raise awareness and funds

for cancer patients across the country, The Big Walk was created. "In January of this year, we quit our jobs, sold our cars and left our home," Buoniconti says. "We basically left everything we had to make this possible." The 16,000-mile journey began March 26 in Augusta, Maine. The walk will culminate in San Diego on April 27, 2008. His wife, Heather Buoniconti, drives their RV about 5 miles ahead and picks him up when he's finished his average stroll of 15 miles each day. Most of the time they sleep in their RV at campgrounds, churches or parking lots. Sometimes, a hotel donates a room to the couple. In the mornings, Buoniconti

starts where he left off. So far, about \$76,500 has been donated to the 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and funds have been placed into accounts in 18 states. The program has helped seven people, and about \$35,000 has been given in assistance. Two applications are pending in separate states. "The feeling of helping people survive is the best paycheck you can get," Buoniconti says. "I wouldn't be out here doing it if I didn't think we would reach that goal." Whenever the temperature is too hot or steep hills challenge his muscles, Buoniconti looks to memories of his family for inspiration. "(My mother) could fight cancer for six years," he says. "I can walk for three years."

Perhaps the most triumphant day was the day he visited his parents' grave site in Massachusetts. "It just so happens that I was retiring my first pair of sneakers," he says. And as he left those sneakers and a bouquet of roses by the grave site, for the first time a smile stretched across his face and he wept tears of joy. "I just had an overwhelming feeling of pride," he says. The stories he's heard and the survivors he's met are all the motivation he needs to keep moving. "It makes the rest of the day walking with sore feet worth it."



John Buoniconti (right) and his wife Heather (left) pose outside the RV that Heather drives to keep up with her husband's miles-long treks.

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

KANNAPOLIS

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struct an Institute for Advanced Fruit and Vegetable Science, which will work to find ways to manufacture more nutritious fruits and vegetables. A school of science for 11th and 12th-grade girls will be developed by UNC-Charlotte. Officials said the university ultimately would work on the bioinformatics end of nutrition research. Duke University might also get

in on the action, but a deal hasn't been finalized. The capabilities of such a highly scientific region will be attractive to many people and businesses across the country, Broad said. "The research that will be conducted here will attract some of the world's greatest scientists and graduate students," she said. Construction on the first facility, a 330,000-square-foot Core Laboratory, will break ground within 90 days, Murdock said. The facility will contain state-

of-the-art equipment used for everything from DNA sequencing to mass spectrometry, and could open within two years. A 1,000-seat auditorium for national scientific conferences and local cultural events also is planned. The new campus ultimately could allow the city to lead the state in scientific research, said N.C. House Speaker Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg. "Look out Research Triangle, here comes Kannapolis!" Black

said during the event. Dole officials want to benefit local farmers by purchasing large quantities of their fruits and veggies for use at the center. "The effect will reach far beyond the borders of this campus and involve the entire state's agricultural community," Murdock said. About 300 researchers will be hired to fulfill the needs of the complex, he said.

And new training will be available for those who lost their jobs at the textile plant in 2003. "A facility will be located right on campus to help former Pillowtex workers and others to be retrained for work in the biotechnical community," Murdock said. The creation of such a scientific utopia has long been a personal interest, he said. "I've always dreamed of building a scientific community that is

entirely scientific." Such a community would be a huge lift for the economically scarred city of Kannapolis, Rutledge said. "With that vision that (Murdock) had, it's just beyond anything that I dreamed of," he said. "I hope I can live long enough to see the fruition of it." Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

THE Daily Crossword By Verna Suit

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include 'Retired soldiers' org.', 'Sub detectors', 'Italian car maker', 'Actor Wallach', 'Historic Harlem theater', 'Sch. for Bruins', 'Three dry things', 'Explorer Tasman', 'Protest vote', 'Ribbed cloth', 'Expand', 'Vast expanse', 'Put down', 'Formed drops', 'Go after', 'Part of APB', 'Sweetie pie', 'Do figure eights', 'Jaunty rhythm', 'Bamboo eater', 'Only Time' singer, 'Russian villa', 'Staggers', 'Non-negotiable starts?', 'Stanford of Stanford University', 'Illustrator', 'Beardsley', '1006 once', 'Contingencies', 'Skillful servers', 'Setting sights', 'Lawyers' grp.', 'Thought', 'Three dry things', 'Smith or Jackson', 'Perceptive', 'Bottle top', 'Appear', 'Made a home', 'UK distances', 'Designer Wang', 'Goof', 'Three dry things', 'Sucker', 'Became available', 'Pitcher Ryan', 'Friendly nation', 'Kidnapped' auth., 'David of the Supreme Court', 'Honshu peak', 'Three dry things', 'Big name in aluminum', 'Shabby', 'Skidded', 'Trumpets and tubas', 'Xmas month', 'Nappy leather', 'Like some eagles', 'Director Kazan', 'Yeared', 'Luau guitar, briefly', 'Mountain lakes', 'Actress Daly', 'No sweat', 'Smokey's middle name?', 'Menu option', 'Skirt shape', 'Seek damages', 'Crocheted throw', 'Panache', 'Mardi Gras wear', 'Curriculum', 'Nearly', 'Agenda entry', 'Qtys.', 'Mild, yellow cheese', 'Small snakes', 'Exploit', 'H.S. dropout's cert.'

Advertisement for Redefine Travel featuring a man in a car and the text 'CARPOOL redefine the way you travel redefinetravel.org'.

Large advertisement for Newegg.com with the headline 'ROOMMATE TOO TALKATIVE?' and an image of headphones. Includes a 'ADD TO CART' button and the Newegg logo.

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