

Daddy in seat 16C and Blogger Mom of Child with Autism Form Team for Easter Seals New Jersey's Walk & 5K Run

Erik Kunkel, recently made famous by Canadian mommy blogger Shanell Mouland who dubbed him as "Daddy in seat 16C", has joined forces with his fellow passenger to show support for other families living with disabilities by forming a team that will participate in Easter Seals New Jersey's 5th annual "Walk With Me" 1-mile Walk and 5K Run on April 12, 2014 at East Rutherford's MetLife Stadium.

A chance meeting between strangers on an airplane heading to Canada became a viral internet sensation when Mouland wrote an open letter to the kind stranger. Mouland and her 3-year-old daughter Kate, who has autism, were passengers on a flight that placed the business executive in a seat right next to them. Worried that Kate's behavior might make the flight uncomfortable for their seat mate, Mouland was pleasantly surprised and grateful to the stranger for actually making the experience more comfortable for them. Little did the stranger know how much his gracious and patient attitude would be appreciated by the mom and her little girl. Kate became so comfortable with Kunkel she called him "daddy" the rest of the flight. Mouland was so appreciative she took to the internet to sing the stranger's praises in an open letter that went viral and eventually lead to the Canadian mom meeting New Jersey resident and recently appointed Easter Seals New Jersey board member Kunkel.

It is with the same spirit in which he approached his meeting with young Kate that he looks to support the mission of Easter Seals New Jersey. He has already enlisted his former seat mates to be teammates at the organization's annual 1-mile walk and 5K run. The Mouland family will travel from Canada to join Kunkel and form a team as a show of support for other individuals with disabilities and special needs and their families.

Easter Seals New Jersey's Walk With Me is a fundraising event for individuals and families to raise awareness and support for people living with disabilities. On Saturday, April 12th individuals and teams will join the Kunkel and the Mouland families at the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ to show their support by walking or running in the event filled with entertainment and family fun. Each participant's motivation to walk or run is unique; it may be for themselves, a child or a loved one, a neighbor or a colleague. Twenty percent of the US population lives with a disability today — like autism, which has affected a significant amount of families.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: Saturday, April 12, 2014

Location: MetLife Stadium, Home of Super Bowl XLVIII, East Rutherford, NJ

Schedule: 9:00am Registration/Gates Open | 10:15am Opening Ceremony | 10:30am Walk/Run Kick-off | 11:30am After-Party | 12:00pm Race Awards | *Health Fair & Activities open 9:00am-12pm

Course Route: 1 Mile Walk through concourse levels of stadium * 5K Run through outskirts of stadium * All walkers & runners will finish on the field!



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To register for the event go to <http://www.walkwithme.org/nj>. News12 anchor Bryan Jenkins will be the master of ceremonies for this year's event. Other special guests include Miss New Jersey, D2W Wrestlers and rock band "Monterey." Event sponsors include MetLife Stadium, 92.3 NOW, Star 99.1, 1450 WCTC Talk Radio.

About Easter Seals

Easter Seals New Jersey has been creating solutions that change the lives of people with disabilities and special needs since 1948. Our mission is to help individuals and families live, learn, work and play in their communities with equality, dignity and independence. Annually, over 7,000 people in New Jersey with developmental disabilities including autism, physical disabilities, mental illness and other special needs receive services in our programs designed to help them work toward achieving independence and full community-integration. For more information on Easter Seals New Jersey and its statewide disability services, please contact 732-257-6662 or visit <http://www.eastersealsnj.org> or <http://www.facebook.com/eastersealsnj>.

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