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"COWBOY PHILANTHROPIST" WILL HIKE 3,100 MILES TO HELP FRIEND WITH "STIFF PERSON" DISEASE TO AFFORD TREATMENT

RICHARDSON, Texas—Since she turned 46, Alison Largent has been fighting the extremely rare disease Stiff Person Syndrome as well as chronic Lyme disease. Her best friend, whom Allie has dubbed the Cowboy Philanthropist, is hiking 3,100 miles to help Alison afford treatment for her rare medical issues so that she can find hope again.

McKennon "Mac" Laas spent time in the rodeo and oil & gas arenas before he found his true calling: giving back to members of his community in need of a little hope. Today, as the Cowboy Philanthropist, Mac works on charity endeavors backed by the spirit of hope and hospitality. According to his website thecowboyphilanthropist.com, Mac wants to "illustrate how our western lifestyles can promote core values of taking care of one's neighbors, giving more than taking, and being a person of integrity."

Until three years ago, Alison was the pinnacle of health, a marathon and triathlon runner and an Ironman finisher—driven, athletic, and independent. Out of the blue, she was diagnosed with [Stiff Person Syndrome](#) (SPS), a rare disease that causes progressive muscle rigidity and painful, unpredictable seizures. "SPS slowly turns you into the Tin Man," she explained. "It makes your muscles either stiffen and cramp or go into painful spasms which can last for hours."

To help Alison with her immense health care costs, Mac is pledging \$1 of his own money for every mile that he walks of the unbelievable Continental Divide Trail – the part of the trail he plans on covering is the 3,100-miles from Mexico to Canada starting in April 2020.

The exact cause of SPS remains unknown, and there is no cure. Alison is also battling the challenges of severe, advanced-stage Lyme disease. "Every day is hard," she said. "Without my background, I would have given up a long time ago. But you know what? That is not me."



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Along with these painful and debilitating physical issues, Alison is reaching the end of her options for treatment, and her medical care is exceptionally expensive, including frequent appointments, hospitalizations, medications, and even home modifications to accommodate a wheelchair as she slowly loses her mobility to SPS. She fundraises with the nonprofit Help Hope Live to help with these costs at <https://helphopelive.org/campaign/14896/>

To amplify the effect of his fundraising hike, Mac is asking everyone who hears about his journey to make a tax-deductible donation to Help Hope Live, the national nonprofit working with Alison to raise funds for her uncovered medical expenses. Donations can be made to the fundraising campaign in Alison's honor at <https://helphopelive.org/campaign/14896/> or by calling 800.642.8399. You can match Mac's pledge of \$1 per mile or donate any other amount of your choice.

Donations are managed entirely by the nonprofit via Help Hope Live's South-Central Catastrophic Illness Fund. Funds raised are used to cover medical and related expenses only, and the nonprofit verifies every medical bill prior to payment.

Alison is humbled and extremely grateful to Mac for his efforts to put critical care within her reach once again: "I call him my brother; I am in complete awe of him." She posts updates on her health and Mac's hike plans at <https://helphopelive.org/campaign/14896/>.

Help Hope Live is a national nonprofit that specializes in engaging communities in fundraising campaigns for people who need a transplant or are affected by a catastrophic injury or illness. Since 1983, campaigns organized by Help Hope Live have raised over \$135 million to pay patient expenses.

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