

2007 STEPS COMMUNITY HEROES AWARDS PROGRAM
HELD ON JUNE 6, 2007 IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

ALAN WILMARTH'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

ALAN WILMARTH: Our employer is a partner in the Steps Program when it first started. I thought my obesity, my high blood pressure, my stress level, the loss of hair that was happening was because I work in healthcare. And I found out I was wrong after joining BCWalks. But see my commitment and my desire. Your story was amazing. I have four wonderful grandchildren. I have an incredible history of diabetes. My grandfather was taken from me when I was eighteen years old. I was his oldest grandson. We fished everywhere together. He had his leg amputated as a result of diabetes that was very poorly controlled. And I can tell you stories that were just amazing that were etched in my mind forever about how it was that that disease took him, but more important was how he lived with it.

And just one quick one. He was an avid fisherman. After he had his leg off it was pretty clear he wasn't going to be able to get in the boat anymore. And so one afternoon he said to me, "Alan, your grandmother's working. What do you say we try to go fishing?" I told him, "Yeah, we can do this." So we got down by the dock with his wheelchair. I got in the boat. And I was pretty good at moving him. I had taken training so I knew how to use the belt and get him up. What I didn't account for was that boats tip. And so I launched my grandfather over my shoulder into the lake. Now that wasn't the first time I had gotten him wet, but it was one of the funniest. Now we got him back in the boat, but not until we had it pretty well swamped so it wasn't floating by much. Once we got the boat bailed out and got out in the lake, we had a wonderful afternoon. It was the last time we were in the boat together.

But see he changed my life forever. When I joined BC Walks, my heart attack risk factor was eight and a half out of ten; I was hypertensive, poorly controlled; my cholesterol was over 300; my fasting blood sugars were over 100. Today I don't take any blood pressure medicine; my resting pulse is in the 60s; my blood pressure is 116/70; my fasting sugars are in the low 80s; my cholesterol is below 200. And I owe that to the Steps Program. Mary and her crew. I don't know why they insist on calling me a hero because I'm not. The heroes are you guys. And we've heard that theme through everyone who picked up this award this morning. And it was Winston Churchill who said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." And if you take a minute to look around, each of you is making a tremendous life because what you give to your communities, what you've invested in the health of our nation, the future of our kids and our grandkids. It's just amazing. I'm awed every time I'm with you. It's a great pleasure to be with you today and I want to thank you so much for this award.

END OF SPEECH