

For Immediate Release

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**Inspired by Gratitude for a “Lucky Break,”  
Brookline Teacher Devotes Himself to Raising Money and Awareness for  
ALS**

**Brookline, MA, April 22, 2003** --- In his famed farewell speech in 1939, Lou Gehrig said he “may have got a bad break,” but still considered himself “the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

Gehrig then went on to recount his life’s good fortune for the crowd of 62,000 fans assembled – a fortune which included the gift of physical prowess, the company of baseball legends, mentoring of great leaders, and the love of a strong and courageous wife and family. When he finished, Gehrig closed his eloquent and moving address by saying simply, “I may have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for.”

Spoken like a true hero.

We know today that the “bad break” the Iron Horse spoke of was amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS – a neuromuscular disease with no known cause or cure that paralyzes its victims, while leaving their mental capabilities intact. The lifespan for someone diagnosed with ALS is between two to five years. Lou Gehrig died at 37, just two short years after his farewell speech.

Fast forward to 1993, and consider a hero on another scale; a local hero whose fan club consists not of throngs of sports fanatics, but instead, decades of fourth grade graduates from the Pierce School in Brookline, MA.

In 1993, Paul Tamburello, a veteran elementary school teacher, originally from Pittsfield, but now living in Watertown, found himself experiencing some of the same problems that sent Lou Gehrig to his doctor in 1939. But after months of tests, doctors informed Tamburello that his fate would be much more kind than that which met the Iron Horse. Diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy, Tamburello would experience some of the muscular wasting associated with ALS, but his disease was NOT fatal.

Because spinal muscular atrophy is what Tamburello describes to friends as “just a few genes removed” from ALS, Tamburello too, considered himself “one of the luckiest men on the face of the earth.”

Also, like Gehrig, knowing he “had an awful lot to live for,” Tamburello decided to make it his mission to thank his doctors for his “lucky break” by raising money to find a cure for the disease that he felt he was spared, knowing that many were not so lucky.

Despite the muscular wasting caused by his spinal muscular atrophy, Paul decided to mount a surprising physical response to the challenge that had been dealt him. So in 1995 he embarked upon his inaugural “Positive Spin for ALS,” a 126-mile solo bike ride from Watertown to Provincetown, Massachusetts to raise money and awareness of ALS.

In that first year, Paul asked his friends and family to sponsor him in his journey. Paul raised more than \$8,000, which he donated to the Cecil B. Day Laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital in recognition of his doctors’ compassion and medical excellence.

Over the next seven years, he would decrease the route length to 86 miles, starting at Plymouth Rock and riding to Provincetown. The money he raised in those years went to the ALS Association in support of its Patient and Caregivers programs. Paul raised over \$200,000 through his annual solo Spins.

In 2002, realizing that there is strength in numbers, Paul took the opportunity to merge his efforts with another group of cyclists also committed to raising money for ALS.

That year, Paul’s “Positive Spin for ALS” joined forces with the “Ride4ALS,” a bike ride started by a group of Metrowest residents whose lives had also been affected in some way by ALS.

United, the “Positive Spin for ALS” is now an annual event that attracts hundreds of riders. Hosted by The Longfellow Club in Wayland, the Positive Spin offers 4 rides of varying lengths, with each route named to honor a loved one diagnosed with ALS. Last year’s ride was a tremendous success, raising \$121,000 for patient care and ALS research. The hope is that this year’s event will be even larger.

While many are in awe of Paul’s selfless commitment to the cause over so many years, Paul reports that it is truly a win-win situation.

“I’ve always considered doing this ride good medicine for myself,” says Tamburello. “I took an idea, and feelings that I needed to express, and turned them into a reality that has nourished me and allowed me to serve others,” says Tamburello. “What’s more, the Positive Spin has provided a good life lesson through which I can teach my fourth graders, by way of a very real example, how to manage diversity. On so many levels - everybody wins with this ride.”

Spoken like another true hero.

To learn more about the Positive Spin for ALS™, or to register to ride in honor of those who can't, visit Paul Tamburello's web site at [www.positivespinforals.org](http://www.positivespinforals.org) or call the ALS Association at (781) 326-8884.

### **About the Positive Spin for ALS™**

The Positive Spin for ALS™ is an annual cycling event and fundraiser consisting of four concurrent bike rides designed for riders of any ability. The routes are 10, 25, 50 and 100-miles in length, and each is named in honor of a local person stricken with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, (ALS).

At advanced stages, care for an ALS patient can cost up to \$200,000 per year. Money raised through this event finances programs such as a durable equipment loan program and respite care, for 200 local patients and their families through the ALS Association, MA Chapter. The money also supports national research to find effective treatments and ultimately a cure for ALS. For more information about the ride, visit [www.positivespinforals.org](http://www.positivespinforals.org).

### **About The ALS Association, Massachusetts Chapter**

The ALS Association is the only national not-for-profit health agency dedicated solely to the fight against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. The ALS Association covers all the bases - research, patient and community services, public education, and advocacy - in providing help and hope to those facing the disease. The mission of The ALS Association (ALSA) is to find a cure for and improve living with ALS. The MA Chapter of the organization currently serves over 200 ALS patients. For more information, please visit [www.als-ma.org](http://www.als-ma.org).