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# Parker continues long journey to kill brain cancer

First Posted: 7:22 am - September 30th, 2015 Updated: 2:42 pm - October 2nd, 2015. - 452 Views

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Maria Parker has peddled across the country in her quest to find a cure for brain cancer, and now she plans to run across the Grand Canyon.

Those of us who have come to know this remarkable woman are not surprised — nor do we doubt she will do exactly as she plans this weekend.

You probably know of Parker, who has adopted Lumberton and Robeson County as her home, because she has given us the passenger's seat on what has been a remarkable two-year journey that appears to still be in its infancy.

The really short version is this: In 2013, Parker learned that her sister, Jenny Mulligan, was suffering from brain cancer. Feeling powerless but

empowered, Parker didn't go small, but determined she was going to raise \$1 million to help find a cure and save her sister's life, and her first endeavor would be cycling across the country. Parker's support vehicle on what was called 300 Miles to a Cure was involved in an accident during Race Across America and, although she lost a day, Parker persevered and not only finished the race, but was the first woman to do so and in record time.

Jenny lost her battle to cancer late in June 2014, but Parker's fight against the disease has hardly paused.

She hopes to raise \$250,000 this weekend in what is dubbed "Crossing the Canyon." She and brain-cancer survivor and Ironman triathlete, BethAnn Telford, will travel 21 miles across the Grand Canyon using a steep and rugged route that features a 10,000-foot elevation change. In a single day.

"When I did RAAM, I always had my sister on my mind," told this newspaper. "I'm feeling a lot more positive about the future for people. There's a lot of exciting research going on. At that time I was just desperate and I really wanted to save my sister's life. She's been gone for over a year now so I'm coming to terms with that in part because of the generosity and kindness of people in Robeson County."

Parker has raised about \$125,000 toward her \$1 million goal, which was probably always overly ambitious, perhaps purposely so as Parker intends to remain on the journey throughout her life.

Parker is doing the hard part. Your job, which can be done from the comfort of the couch, is easy — to visit [crowdrise.com/CrossingtheCanyon/fundraiser/mariaparker](http://crowdrise.com/CrossingtheCanyon/fundraiser/mariaparker) and make a donation.

Brain cancer doesn't kill as often as does lung, breast, colon, pancreatic and prostate cancers, just to name a handful, which helps explain why funding for research lags. But it is a sure killer, and 70,000 Americans each year are diagnosed with one of more than 100 types of cancerous tumors in the brain and about 14,000 die of the disease each year.

It is an effort that needs a tireless advocate — and Parker has embraced that role to honor her sister.

She is worthy of your help.

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