



Stampede Scleroderma Q & A with Julie Crego and John Michalski

Stampede Scleroderma is the Michigan Chapter's signature fundraising event – a day to further support and raise money for the scleroderma community. On June 5, 2022 we celebrate our 43rd annual event. Because of the tremendous success of the Stampede Scleroderma event in 2020, the Michigan Chapter was able to fund a two-year research grant for the University of Michigan in the amount of \$150,000. Our 2021 Stampede Scleroderma, too, saw great success. Though the event was a virtual fundraiser, we were still able to rally the community and raise over \$90,000. Every team helped play a crucial role in raising funds to support the scleroderma community, raise awareness and ultimately find a cure.

We're here to support you, too as you grow your team and work toward fundraising milestones. We sat down with Board Members Julie Crego and John Michalski to talk about their involvement in Stampede Scleroderma, fundraising tips and more.

How did your scleroderma journey start?

John: I joined the scleroderma community in 2001 when my wife was diagnosed. After acceptance of the diagnosis, my wife reached out to the Scleroderma Foundation to learn how they could help.

Julie: My 11-year-old son was misdiagnosed before receiving his diagnosis. Then I connected with a Michigan Chapter board member through my job at Wayne State University.

How did you find out about Stampede Scleroderma?

John: I decided to participate when I first joined the community and have been involved for nearly 20 years. I'm the Chairman of Stampede Scleroderma and have helped organize the annual event for many years.

Julie: My family wanted to participate and raise awareness, specifically for pediatric patients as they are uncommon.





Why do you continue to participate in this event?

John: This event is a place you realize you're not alone. There are so many others who understand the struggles of the disease and you find an amazing network of support at this event. The scleroderma community comes together for Stampede Scleroderma.

Julie: The event is very family friendly and there is something for everyone. Stampede Scleroderma is a well-run, easy event to attend to show support for people living with the disease. It's a fun atmosphere with the people and animals at the zoo.



What is your favorite part of Stampede Scleroderma?

John: I enjoy all the people that gather to support the cause, the positive energy and the crowd gathering at the start of the race.

Julie: I like the positive atmosphere and being surrounded by people who understand and live with the disease. It's also an opportunity for friends and family to show their support. There is something special knowing that there are others in the community who genuinely care.

Any tips and/or tricks to fundraising for Stampede Scleroderma 2022?

John: The first step is knowing and accepting that fundraising is not always fun. Being in the correct mindset to ask for help through donations is key. People want to help – they need to know why and how. Contact everyone you know and make it easy for them to respond. If asking for support by mail, be sure to include a pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope. If asking for donations by email or Facebook, make sure to include a link to your team page in the message or post. Remember to personalize the message as well.

Julie: It's important to tell your story about scleroderma because it raises awareness for the cause. Inviting friends, family and neighbors to fundraising events is a great way to raise awareness and fundraise. I have hosted several raffle basket events with items donated by friends and local businesses. Additionally, children in the neighborhood have collected bottles and donated the deposit money to my team page. People want to volunteer and donate – don't be afraid to accept their help. Utilize your network when asking for donations and contact everyone. People like to be recognized so always thank those who donated. Thanking donors by making signs and allowing business donors to include their flyers or business cards at your fundraising event is a great way to show appreciation as well.

