

# Water skiers 'Pull for



Travis Lukens traces an elegant arc behind a motor boat on the Rock River in Newville last Saturday, April 11. Lukens and other water skiers took to the water to raise money in the fight against multiple sclerosis. (Edgerton Reporter photo/David Esau)

## a Cure' in Newville

By Jeff Brown and David Esau  
Reporter staff

Water skiers and wakeboarders took to the cold, choppy water of the Rock River in Newville last Saturday afternoon to raise money to fight multiple sclerosis. The event, dubbed 'Pull for a Cure,' was organized by Jan's Fans. Illinoisans Tom and Janice Hart established Jan's Fans in 1994 after Janice, who works as a neonatal nurse, was diagnosed with MS.

According to the website of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, MS is an unpredictable disease that afflicts the central nervous system and slowly robs the brain of the ability to communicate with the spinal cord and other parts of the body. Common symptoms include weakness, difficulty walking and blurred vision, although the symptoms are different for each person with the disease.

Two-and-a-half million people around the world suffer from MS. Doctors don't know what causes the disease and there's no cure—yet.

The Harts want to change that.

On Monday Hart said that so far last Saturday's event has taken in \$5,300; once all the pledges come in he expects the total haul to top \$6,000. Hart estimated that 'Pull for a Cure' (the event used to be called 'Jan's Fans') has raised about \$175,000 since its inception in 1994, all of

which has gone to the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

For 21 years, the Harts have held "Pull for a Cure" in the spring when the water's cold. That allows the skiers and wakeboarders to experience the tingling, numbness and fatigue that MS sufferers struggle with every day.

"As we warm up those symptoms disappear," said Hart, "but for people with MS they wake up every morning and wonder 'OK, is this tingling going to go from my feet to my knees? Every day is very unpredictable.'"

The idea came to Hart in the spring of 1994. Hart had long wanted to buy a boat but Janice balked at the idea. But after doctors diagnosed her with MS, she said "Let's do it."

Hart was eager to get out on the water in the new boat, even though the air was still chilly. Once the couple came in off the water, Hart complained about the numbness and fatigue dealt out by the wind and the wet and the cold.

"She looked at me and said 'That's what I'm dealing with every day,'" Hart said "That's where the idea occurred to try and use this to raise funds."

This is the second year "Pull For A Cure" has been held in Wisconsin. For the first 19 years the Harts held the event on the Fox River in St. Charles, Ill., a suburb of Chicago. But Tom Hart said an annual canoe race held each spring, plus the fact his in-laws live in the Edgerton

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## 'Pull for a Cure'

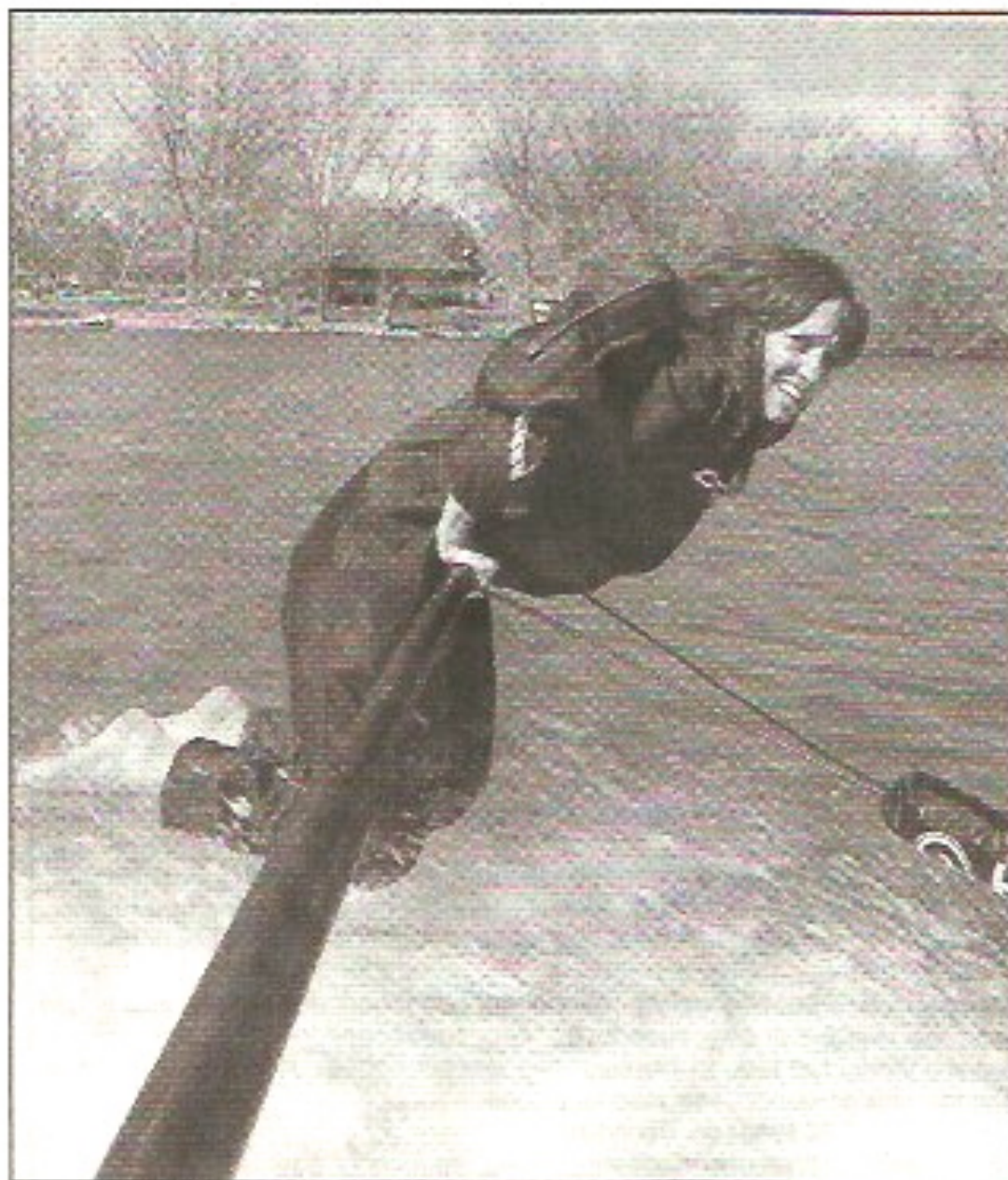
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area, caused them to re-locate the event to Newville last year.

Donors make pledges for the event, but don't have to get in the water to donate. Watersports, said Hart, is "the hook just to get people to notice us."

That hook worked, if Saturday's show was any indication. Dozens of people, including members of Janesville's Aqua Jays, sliced thrilling swaths across the river's surface, throwing up sparkling rooster tails and eliciting whoops from spectators along the shore, whether skiing barefoot, slalom or wakeboarding.

This year's 'Pull for a Cure' was once again sponsored by Redline Watersports, a Madison company, and the Anchor Inn.



+ Mindy Vitucci prepares to water ski barefoot in the Rock River near Newville on Saturday, April 11 as part of the "Pull for a Cure" fundraiser. (Edgerton Reporter photo/David Esau)



