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Rob Cooney 2018 Lake Erie Swim

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Rob Cooney is a 38 year-old lifelong resident of Erie currently residing in McKean. He and his wife, Keri of 14 years have three children - Ely, Alex and Anna. He is the son of Dave and Patty Cooney also of Erie. Rob attended Cathedral Prep (class of 1997) where he competed on the swimming and water polo teams. He graduated from Penn State Behrend with a Bachelor of Science degree in Plastics Engineering Technology. Rob is currently Manufacturing Manager and partner of Plastikos, Inc. and Micro Mold, Co. Inc. where he has worked over the past 16 years.

Rob got back into lap pool swimming 6 years ago and had been completing 4 to 5 daily workouts per week at 5 AM before work prior to making the commitment to train for a Lake Erie crossing. He has been competing in open water swimming events over the past few years through swimming relay legs of triathlons, Iron Man races, as well as other open water swimming competitions.

Rob made the commitment to train for the Lake Erie Swim in September of 2017. With the help and guidance of several past Lake Erie swimmers, Rob engineered a strong training plan. He has completed 720 miles of training within the past 9 months. The large majority of his training has taken place at LECOM Medical Fitness and Wellness Center in Erie, PA. He has also completed weekend swims through the winter and spring months at the Spire Institute in Geneva, OH in their long course (50m) pool. Starting on Memorial Day, Rob began open water training swims. Each weekend since, he has trained in a variety of lakes throughout Pennsylvania and New York.

Rob has a dedicated support crew who has helped him complete these open water swims with kayak support and especially gives credit to Elliot Spaeder who has been instrumental in providing guidance throughout training. Elliot successfully completed the Lake Erie swim in 2014 and will be Rob's official observer to document the upcoming swim. Rob and his crew have had fun traveling to different lakes over the past 6 weekends to complete swims up to 20 miles. His support kayakers have gained invaluable experience with different water conditions as well as practice with open water feedings which help Rob to stay adequately fueled for the long distances.

"Without having a strong family commitment and their encouragement, this swim would not be possible." Preparing to swim Lake Erie has involved an extremely focused training, detail-oriented daily nutrition and many hours of swimming sometimes both in the morning and evening. It has been challenging to fit in all the training along with work and family life with three younger children, but Rob has shown extreme dedication and has worked hard while staying focused on his end goal. Rob's wife, Keri, has been instrumental leading the effort for him to meet his nutritional goals established by a sports nutritionist at Indiana Regional Medical Center. "As an engineer, I like to create designs or plans, optimize them and focus on continuous improvement. I have taken a similar approach with a tremendous amount of support to ensure that I'm considering all aspects from the physical, mental and nutritional sides of what I'm doing. I've stuck to a rigid plan for 9 months with some minor changes and am really looking forward to getting back to more time with my family who has been such a huge support to me along the way."

Along with the desire to show his three children what they are capable of in life with a strong commitment, hard work ethic and relentless dedication toward achieving any goal, the main reason is that Rob is swimming Lake Erie is for his father who was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease 11 years ago. Rob has a very close relationship with his father, Dave, and enjoys spending quality time especially throughout the fall and winter months hunting together. Living near his parents, Rob has been blessed to be around them while his father has been putting up a courageous fight against the debilitating disease.

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Knowing first-hand the struggles that a Parkinson's patient as well as their family encounter on a daily basis, Rob's training and swim are being dedicated to all of those in the region who are living with these challenges. All proceeds from his fundraising will go directly to Parkinson Partners of Northwestern Pennsylvania whose mission is to provide help and hope to the local Parkinson's disease community through various support group meetings, a Parkinson's Disease-specific wellness program, seminars and a respite care program. Rob recently met visited a weekly exercise class and that has further inspired Rob during the final weeks of his training.

Fundraising: Parkinson's Partner's of Northwestern Pennsylvania www.parkinsonpartners.org

Facebook group: Rob Cooney 2018 Lake Erie Swim

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Rob mentally preparing for an open water race



Rob and his father Dave following an open water training swim

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