

Press release Pilgrimage for Parkinson's Research

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→ **Pilgern für die
Parkinsonforschung**

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for Parkinson's Research**
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Eva-Maria from Mühlhausen in Thuringia was 14 when she met Günter. He was destined to become the love of her life. At the time he was studying theology. He actually wanted to become a doctor but in the GDR it wasn't possible to choose what he wanted to study. As he was conclusively denied the opportunity to study medicine, Günter changed from studying theology to a five year remote study degree in Textile Technology. From there on he worked as Vice Director for Research and Development in a textile company in Thuringia.

When he and Eva-Maria have been married for 20 years and have two teenage children, Günter is stung by a wasp at the age of 43 during a business trip in 1988. The sting triggers an anaphylactic shock with a lack of oxygen to the brain, which in turn leads to Parkinson's syndrome. This changes nothing in terms of their love and desire to stay together. Günter keeps himself fit for years with sport and exercise and Eva-Maria lovingly takes care of the man who she will have been married to for 47 years, sacrificing much of her own life, until the day in February 2016, when Günter passed away after 28 years of serious illness. Eva-Maria is now 70 years old.

Stephanie, now 49 years old and from Frankfurt/Main, first noticed the change in her mobility in 2006. At this point in her life the qualified multilingual secretary had been working for 20 years as for international companies, as Executive and Board Assistant. Following hiking holidays in the Himalayas and the Andes she noticed that her way of walking suddenly changed. It then took a two year odyssey from doctors to therapists and back until Stephanie was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease shortly before her fortieth birthday. At least then the symptoms had a name.

Cut – and another leap, this time to 2009. At that time Eva-Maria and Stephanie meet at a sport therapy class. The woman from Thuringia was accompanying her husband at the time and the two women immediately got on really well and developed a close friendship. The two spouses also got on well together and the younger couple from Frankfurt/ Main frequently visited the "experienced" couple in Mühlhausen, where Eva-Maria and Günter had been running a self-help group for Parkinson's sufferers for ten years.

When Stephanie took over the responsibility as Managing Director of the Hilde Ulrichs Foundation in 2014 the friends in Thuringia supported her decision, just as they had supported founder Hermann Terweiden years before as they had the opportunity to get to know him and the Foundation activities in the area of non-pharmaceutical treatment methods.

Stephanie energetically initiated a reorganisation of the Foundation and numerous successful PR campaigns now generate more awareness around the illness - and especially around those sufferers who are diagnosed at an early age.

An example was the Charity Bike Tour 'Benefistanbul 2015' in which two brothers cycled from Hanover to Istanbul. This helped to bring more public awareness to Parkinson's disease (10% are younger than 40 at their diagnosis). Resulting donations of €18,000 were used for research projects. 'Nordic Walking from Flensburg to Garmisch-Partenkirchen' was also a charity initiative in 2016, which generated donations of €4,800 through the commitment of Klaus Kippes and Michael Weber from Hofheim/ Taunus. This was also accompanied by numerous informational events in many towns which were organised with the support of self help groups and mayors.

„We want to undertake a pilgrimage on the St. James Path and encourage sufferers and their loved ones “

In **April 2018** the project '**Pilgrimage for Parkinson's Research**' will start on the 'Camino del Norte'. 'This path is a very special challenge for me' says Eva-Maria. She wants to inspire courage to all those who take care of the seriously ill. 'I supported my husband through his illness for 28 years and the last five years were especially difficult. Every day that we walk symbolises a year that I have lived with the illness'. Both women want to inspire courage and raise funds for the Hilde Ulrichs Foundation for Parkinson's Research. 'That is what Günter would have wanted' Eva-Maria agrees gratefully.



The women have professional support on their pilgrimage from Anita Althaus. Under the motto 'On the Camino to a new life' the qualified Creative Body Therapist has been accompanying people with various illnesses on the St James Way with music and dance since 2004. 'To

undertake a pilgrimage on the Camino means: Meeting yourself and others, observing your self from a distance away from all distractions, learning to sense your own strength, to move on and not only to convince yourself that something is possible but to actually do it. It means testing your own limits – physically and spiritually, experiencing and pushing boundaries – getting past the comfort zone!' Anita Althaus is excited about the project with both women.

Background

The Hilde-Ulrichs-Foundation for Parkinson's Research is an important focal point nationally where Parkinson's patients can get independent advice and useful information for dealing with the illness. It is the first private foundation in Germany to sponsor research on non-pharmaceutical treatment methods. One of the areas of activity is the award of a €10,000 research prize every two years. Furthermore it supports scientific studies and provides important information around staying active with the illness as well as supporting training and continuous education for specialised carers.

Donations can be made to the account:
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