

Former Hays woman has message: Life is worth celebrating

By **PHYLLIS J. ZORN**
HAYS DAILY NEWS

A former Hays woman is looking to line up speaking engagements in the week prior to the launch of a remarkable walk.

On Nov. 20, Phyllis Burdge will set off walking toward Florida with a mission to deliver a message that life — no matter how challenging — is worth celebrating. Burdge, who took her first tentative steps seven years ago after 12 years of being completely dependent on others because of multiple sclerosis, will start her "PB&J American WalkAbout" in Hays on Nov. 20.

PB&J is for Phyllis Burdge and Justice, her assistance dog. Justice wears a special harness and walks beside



Burdge

Burdge said.

Burdge and Justice will leave her hometown of Washington on Nov. 12 headed to Osborne. On Nov. 13, they will arrive in Hays, where the pair will spend a week prior to the official launch of the WalkAbout.

When the WalkAbout kicks off, they will follow a meandering route through

Burdge providing counterbalance to help Burdge walk along. They will walk several miles every day of the journey and ride the rest of the way. To walk the entire route would be too exhausting for Justice,

Russell, Salina, Wichita, Pittsburg, Parsons, Emporia, Manhattan, Wamego, Topeka, Lawrence and Kansas City. The expected arrival date at Kansas City is Dec. 9.

The Kansas City portion of the WalkAbout will mean a reunion with another former Hays resident.

"On Dec. 9 as we arrive in Overland Park during the PB&J American WalkAbout, I will reunite with an old friend, Dr. Eric Dyck, who was my physician for the first couple years that I was in Hays," Burdge said. "When I doctored with him I was not in the very worst condition that I would reach, but I was experiencing exacerbations resulting in hospitalizations, and I was mobile only by way of wheelchair. The reunion with Dr. Dyck

will be very special. He and his wife, Margie, have opened their home to me, Justice, and our chase car driver for the weekend that we will be in the KC area. Then, on Sunday, Dec. 11, when we continue our WalkAbout journey, Dr. Dyck, who is an avid cyclist, will cycle with us for awhile."

Burdge said she and Dyck will both ride bicycles on that leg of the trip.

"My connection with him is friendship, and I look forward to seeing him again for that reason but more, I think it's very special to both of us that we can now share the experience of cycling," Burdge said.

Next they will head for St. Joseph, Cameron, Chillicothe and St. Louis, Mo. After that they will head to Enid and Tulsa, Okla., Mountain Home,

Ark., Memphis, Tenn., Birmingham, Ala., Atlanta, Ga., North Carolina, Charleston, S.C. and end up in Florida in February.

To schedule a talk while Burdge is in Hays, phone (785) 325-3549 or e-mail phyllosopher@sbcglobal.net.

To make a tax-deductible contribution toward her expenses on her trip, send a check to Three Rivers Inc., a non-profit agency assisting Burdge with organizing her journey. Audrey Schremmer-Phillip is executive director.

The address is Three Rivers Inc., 408 Lincoln, P.O. Box 408, Wamego, KS 66547. The telephone number is (785) 456-9915.

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