

Golf tourney helps others, recalls two great brothers

tear runs freely down John Luedke's right cheek as he describes the night his brother died. He lets the drop

room without interference, for a man's tears carry no shame.

John was a 19-year-old college sophomore when Walter Luedke jumped off the Tappan Zee Bridge days before his 26th birthday in 1983. What did John know about death and its meaning? Or life and its meaning?

John was a college kid basking in a period reserved for revelry and immortality. He was still trying to figure it all out the morning of Walter's funeral when an aunt spoke these words:

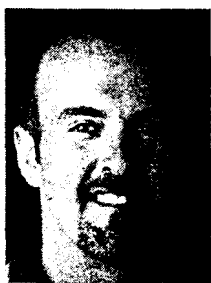
If your brother's death can help one person's life or save one person's life, then his death was worth something."

The words remained with John Luedke through the years. Then tragedy struck again. His brother Eddie died of AIDS in 1990 at age 28.

The aunt's theme began to ring in John's ears.

He got married and made it big as a commodities trader on Wall Street. He was living the American dream in Goshen.

But Luedke, 36, realized material goods held limited value. He created the Walter and Edward Luedke Memorial Foundation to benefit worthy causes in Orange

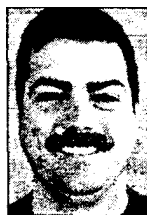


Kevin Gleason

County. The eighth annual Walter Luedke Memorial Golf Classic will be held Sept. 29 at The Golf Club at Mansion Ridge in Monroe. More than \$100,000 has been raised since the tournament's inception. Another \$5,000 is donated annually in Eddie's name to benefit a Washingtonville High student pursuing a career in the health and medical field.

The golf tournament raised \$36,000 last year for Matthew Dudgeon of Chester, who endured a rare neuromuscular disorder before dying May 12 at age 2. This year money will go to Sally's Dream, named in honor of Sally McGlynn. She was a staunch advocate for people with disabilities. McGlynn, a 25 year volunteer, was instrumental in establishing centers for independent living. She was one of those unsung heroes who propel America's heartbeat.

— John Luedke



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died in March 1999, friends promised to help create a playground in her memory. The playground will be built in Thomas Bull Memorial Park in Hamptonburgh.

John Luedke is revved up for the golf tourney. He has burned phone lines seeking donations or items to be used in the auction portion of the event. Fellow Washingtonville graduate Nancy Hastings has been a godsend soliciting donations.

James Dudgeon, father of the late Matthew Dudgeon, already has raised thousands himself this year. Luedke is looking to raise \$30,000-\$50,000.

It's a tournament for the people, from those who participate to those who benefit from proceeds. Lifelong friends of John and his late brothers will be there, just as old pals of siblings Tommy, Danny and Eileen will unite for the cause.

"I want it to get a little bit bigger and a little bit better each year," Luedke said, "but I don't want to start weeding out people. I don't want to turn this into a big corporate event."

Luedke, married with two children, lives by the credo, "Tomorrow may never come." He enjoys the moment while providing for his family's future.

He has come to understand the meaning of life and death. Walter and Eddie's passings have helped many lives, and helped change John's.