

HERO SPOTLIGHT

●●●●● **Alexa Burton**

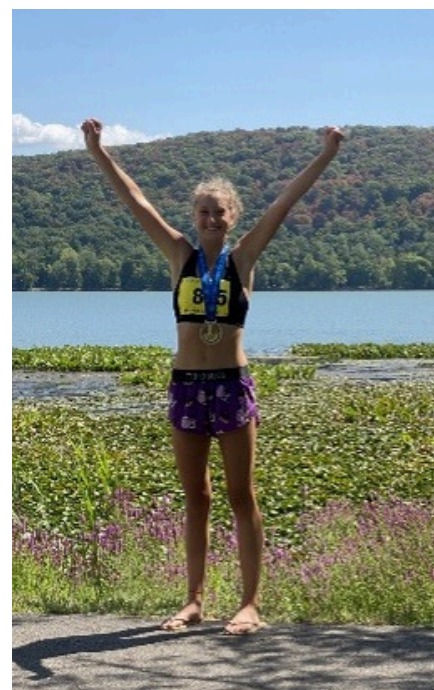


"I wish more people -- young people in particular -- realize that they are capable of doing something to make a difference."

Around midnight on an August night in 2022, Alexa Burton was lying face-down on the floor of her aunt and uncle's Connecticut home, laughing as her mother and sister traced the CureAlz logo onto her back with red and black sharpies. Her limbs were decorated with the names of family members and family friends, all of whom had been impacted by Alzheimer's disease. It was the eve of her first marathon, an effort to raise money for Cure Alzheimer's Fund as a tribute to her grandmothers, both of whom had suffered from the disease.

The marathon itself, The Sri Chinmoy Marathon at a park in upstate New York, featured nine laps around the same lake, a setup designed to bring runners into a meditative state. Alexa, sixteen at the time, arrived wearing a pair of bright purple shorts adorned with cartoon cows and a bright expression on her face.

Alexa's family accompanied her to the race and took turns running different laps with her, determined that she not be alone during the most difficult portions of the run. "The repetition definitely made it particularly challenging," Alexa reflects, "but it also brought a feeling of intimacy to the event."



Alexa Burton at the Sri Chinmoy Marathon, 2022



She described running by the same cheerers every lap and getting excited to re-encounter certain groups. "One man," she remembers, "was playing a different instrument every time I went by: a saxophone, a keyboard, a fiddle. I'm not sure how he got them all to the lakeside, but passing his bench was always particularly energizing."

Sri Chinmoy, 2022

Though Alexa followed a training schedule, she still faced an incredible challenge on race day. “During the hardest miles,” she shared, “I thought of the people whose names I was wearing on my back, and whom I was honoring with my run.” She thought particularly of her grandmothers, Diane Aeschliman and Virginia Burton. Though Virginia had passed away before Alexa was old enough to comprehend her decline, Diane was still losing herself to the disease when Alexa ran the marathon. “The hardship my maternal grandmother was facing every day made my discomfort seem trivial,” she remembered, “and I thought of her strength in sourcing my own.”

In addition to her marathon, Alexa ran a half marathon as a middle schooler to support CureAlz closer to her maternal grandmother’s original diagnosis. “I was lucky that my passion also happened to be a classic way to fundraise,” she said, “and that my family was happy to

support my efforts from a young age.” Had she not been a runner, Alexa thinks that she might never have considered turning her hobby into a fundraising effort, especially as a middle- and high-schooler. “I realize now that anything can be a fundraiser. I don’t think enough people consider that. Especially in the face of such a disabling disease, it’s hard to find a silver lining. I wish more people—young people in particular—realized that they are capable of doing something to make a difference.”



Sri Chinmoy, 2022

East Egg Community Fun Run

The same summer as her marathon, Alexa teamed up with her younger sister, Neve Burton, to organize a fun run in their neighborhood. They connected with Jess Rice, Founder of [Jog Your Memory 5k](#) and fellow CureAlz Hero, to identify the organizational and logistical requirements of planning a race.

The first year was the most complicated as they designed their own invitations, signs, flyers, fundraising page, and race route from scratch. Alexa thinks that a common misconception about fundraising is that hosting an event has to be expensive. When asked about her biggest tip, she advised reaching out to local businesses about donating goods and services to help the event run smoothly. “Everyone in the community is always really supportive. That discovery was one of the best parts of the entire experience. I was always nervous about reaching out, but I learned that people are usually excited to help when offered the opportunity.”



East Egg Community Run, 2025

Alexa and Neve have refined their routine year after year so that each race has been easier to plan than the last. “The event has become a staple within our community. People are really excited to come together every year, and I’ve made so many connections with neighbors who’ve lost loved ones to Alzheimer’s. The race has really allowed us to find community in the face of a disease that can be so isolating for families and caretakers.”

Alexa spends her summers in her paternal grandparents’ former home, sharing the space with her dad’s brother and his family. Though she doesn’t remember her grandmother, living

every summer in a place her paternal grandmother loved has made Alexa feel closer to her: the race serves to honor Virginia within her former community.

Alexa and Neve continue to host their fun run each summer. 2025 marked their fourth year as race organizers and the sisters hope that their effort will inspire other students to take action to fight this devastating disease. “Everyone has a passion,” Alexa noted. “I hope our story reminds people to consider how they might use theirs to make a difference.”

Interested in hosting your own fundraising event for CureAlz?

Visit give.curealz.org/hero or email us at hero@curealz.org.