

## Relay for Life raises record \$250K in 2010 campaign

In his first Relay for Life campaign in 2008, American Cancer Society's Aiken coordinator Michael Brazier was pleased with the \$175,000 raised for cancer research.

The community increased its generosity to \$187,000 in 2009, but nothing could have prepared Brazier and Relay volunteers for the support this year.

At an awards program Monday, co-chair Dr. Holly Woltz announced that the final contributions totalled a record \$250,000.

"It still gives me chills that the community came out to support us like this," said Brazier. "There were so many new faces and teams and in Doc Holly and (co-chairs) Scott and Vindi McMaster, I couldn't have asked for better volunteers."

Woltz served as a Relay co-chair in 2003-04 and has committed to another year in that role in 2011. She'll be joined as co-chair by Lisa Wolf.

"Everything clicked with the volunteers this year," Woltz said. "It's a matter of motivation and enthusiasm. Everybody was so involved and hopeful and they wanted to do as much as they could."

Wolf is a member of Relay team "Shalom," a Cedar Creek Church home group originally formed in support of the late Melissa Bernard during her battle with cancer.

Following Bernard's death three years ago, the group became a Relay team.

"I've really gotten involved," Wolf said. "I lost my dad eight months after we lost Melissa. But it has been seeing all the survivors that has gotten me even more inspired. I never imagined being a Relay co-chair, but I see the strength of all the survivors and I knew I could do more, too. Holly's enthusiasm is so contagious and I'll try to keep feeding off that."

The McMasters lost their daughter, Carley, to cancer in December 2008 and readily agreed to work with Relay For Life during the past year.

"It's fantastic to know that all these folks have contributed to Relay," Scott McMaster said. "We got in this for Carley and have learned so much. We're going to be working with the Brain Tumor Foundation, but we'll be back for Relay. We'll still have a hand in this."

The top contributing teams were St. Paul Lutheran Church, Bridgestone, Cedar Creek (subdivision) Ladies Club, Millbrook Baptist Church and Globally Seeking a Kure.

Central Riders was named the most spirited team. Zion Fair Missionary Baptist Church provided the best food at Relay last month.

Gail's Anatomy had the best decorations, and the South Aiken High School NJROTC team had the best theme. Lisa Willing was cited as the "heart and soul" among the Relay volunteers.

Central Riders, said team captain Tiffany Nicks, is an eclectic group from the Central neighborhood off Wire Road - comprised of people with motorcycles, tractors, antique cars and horses. With four cancer survivors on the team, the members worked hard to raise about \$7,000, Nicks said.

Another Central Rider member, Susan Herrick, is a cancer survivor. She was joined at the awards meeting by her husband Ralph, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.

"His doctors cannot believe how well he's doing," Herrick said. "It's all due to research, and all this that we're doing is paying for it."

St. Paul raised more than \$30,000, most of it from an annual golf tournament held last spring. Dennis Bartholomew organized the tournament, but died following a long struggle with cancer before the first event a few years ago. His wife Sandy and daughter, Jessica Bessette, have been involved ever since.

Relay For Life is always a touching event for them, said Sandy Bartholomew.

"All our emotions get mixed together," said Bessette. "It's sad with all the people who aren't there with us. But it's amazing

that so many people came together to pull off Relay. Raising \$250,000 is just crazy. It really is."

Bridgestone raised about \$28,000 this year, and the entire plant is tuned in to the effort, said team captain Deana Powell.

"Each department does its own fundraisers and then we come together for bigger projects," she said. "We've lost several team members to cancer, so we're all motivated to make this happen."

The Cedar Creek Ladies Club has done remarkably well raising funds within the community without doing any public events, said team captain Anne Kelpy.

"We've got 40 survivors in the club that I know of," she said. "It's a pleasure to be a part of Relay, as it means a lot to us all. There were about 80 of us on the track, but we all left at midnight," Kelpy said with a smile.

BAE Systems was a Relay platinum sponsor this year. Gold sponsors were Aiken Regional Medical Centers, Medical Oncology of Georgia and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions.

Silver sponsors were Maxwell Law Firm, Wolf Construction, Cedar Creek Ladies Club, Forest View Manor Assisted Living, Security Federal, GlaxoSmithKline and ASCO.

The bronze sponsors included Vista Bank, Precision Machine Works, Carolina Musculoskeletal Institute, Aiken Newcomers Club, Aiken County Farm Supplies, R&B Construction, United Hospice, Jim Hudson Lexus, Gail's Anatomy, Aiken Surgical Associates and the firm of Smith, Massey, Brodie, Gynn & Mayes.

In-kind services were provided by Giggeworks and Kent's Korner.

"Above and Beyond" awards were presented to teams that surpassed their goals -- AKA and Friends, Aiken Public Safety, Aiken Woman's Club, Beauty Queens Walk for Cure, Bridgestone, Cedar Creek Ladies Club, Central Riders, Friendship Baptist Church, Globally Seeking a Kure, Pat's Army, Preschool Partners, South Aiken NJROTC, Shalom, South Aiken Church of God, South Aiken Serteens/Palmetto Sertoma, Southern Bank and Trust, St. James Lutheran Church, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Security Federal Bank, Trinity Home Care, Vista Bank, Walgreens 11849, Wound Healing Warriors, Hollow Creek Baptist Church, Aiken Prep and Bonnie's Babies.

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