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Register-Pajaronian

WATSONVILLE PAJARO FREEDOM AROMAS CORRALITOS CASTROVILLE APTOS LA SELVA BEACH ROYAL OAKS ELKHORN MOSS LANDING
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Relay For Life recognizes everyday battle



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Cancer survivors release white rock doves Saturday at Cabrillo College at the opening ceremony of Relay For Life of Santa Cruz.

S.C. Relay For Life raises \$140,000

By TARMO HANNULA
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

APTOS — The 15th annual Relay For Life of Santa Cruz took place over the weekend at Cabrillo College.

This year 374 participants in 40 teams took part in the American Cancer Society fundraiser that raised \$140,000, said organizer Lisa Miroyan.

Relay For Life is a 24-hour overnight community fundraising walk where teams of people camp out around a track. Members of each team take turns walking around the track and maintain 24-hour participation symbolizing the fact that cancer is a 24-hour a day battle. Team members set up camp and cook meals, meet other teams members and hold fundraising events such as food and product sales.

The event kicked off Saturday at 10 a.m. with a handful of speeches and the releasing of 30 white doves by cancer survivors. The first lap of the 24-hour walk, the Survivor's Lap, was taken by cancer survi-



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Wanda Cocina (second from left), who has survived 39 years since she was told she had cancer, is overjoyed to take part in the opening Survivor's Lap.

vors. The emotionally charged lap, filled with tears, hugs and laughter, is a way for survivors to celebrate their victory over cancer while being cheered on by the other participants who line the track. On the second lap, Relay For Life recognizes and celebrates caregivers, who give time, love and support to their friends, family, neighbors and coworkers facing cancer.

"We are saving more people

than we lose — but we still have a long way to go," Miroyan said. "We are going in the right direction and fighting a good fight."

Miroyan said funds raised go to education about cancer and healthy lifestyles, cancer detection and research.

In 1985, Dr. Gordy Klatt walked and ran for 24 hours

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Event returns to Watsonville High School on Saturday

By ERIK CHALHOUB
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — The annual Relay For Life will return to the Watsonville High School track on Saturday at 10 a.m.

So far, 35 teams and 284 participants have raised nearly \$33,000 for the American Cancer Society, according to the event's website.

The 24-hour event runs through Sunday morning, with each team having representatives on the track at all times, even through the night. The reason being, according to organizers, is that "cancer never sleeps."

The opening ceremony begins at 10 a.m. Saturday. At 10:15 a.m. is the "Survivors Lap," when cancer survivors make the first lap around the track.

The luminaria ceremony begins at 8:30 p.m.

Nacho Mama's, 15 First St. in Watsonville, will donate a percentage of sales today and Wednesday from 5-9 p.m. to Relay For Life.

For information, visit www.relayforlife.org/watsonvilleca.

RELAY

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around a track in Tacoma, Wash., ultimately raising \$27,000 through sponsorships to help the American Cancer Society fight the nation's biggest health concern — cancer. A year later, 340 supporters joined the overnight event. Since those first steps, the Relay For Life movement has grown into a worldwide phenomenon, raising more than \$4 billion to fight cancer.

Saturday's keynote speaker was Stella Page, who shared her story of fighting Leukemia with the crowd of about 400. She said that during her 25th year of being a waitress in Los Angeles she began suffering symptoms of low energy and drastic weight loss.

"This time last year I was down to 98 pounds with stage four Leukemia," Page said. "Thank goodness to research and people like Dr. Wu that now I feel healthy and very alive. I'm thriving and I am thrilled and tickled pink."

After explaining her treatment, recovery and personal fight with cancer, Page said, "it's so wonderful to have support as a cancer patient. It's been a large emotional roller coaster."

Each Relay includes a Luminaria Ceremony, which takes place after dark and serves as a way of remembering people lost to cancer. It also honors people who have fought cancer in the past, and supports those whose fight continues. Candles are lit inside of personalized bags and are placed around the relay track as glowing tributes to those who've been affected by cancer.



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Stella Page, who is winning her battle with Leukemia, was the keynote speaker.

"This is my fourth year being involved with Relay and I love being out here," said Anthony Cortez, event chair. "There are too many friends and too many family members lost to cancer. It's awesome to be surrounded by all these people and all these wonderful teams. There's so much work that goes into this. I am seeing more new teams; it's growing every year. It's all about raising funds and support. All proceeds go to fighting cancer. We're out here for 24 hours because cancer doesn't sleep but neither do we."

Cortez said there were people at the Cabrillo event from the east coast and "from all over California."

Miroyan said she was excited by the fact that Relay has taken a firm hold in Santa Cruz County for 15 straight years and continues to grow.

"The American Cancer Society is celebrating their 100 year anniversary which is also very significant," Miroyan said. "Relay covers a huge emotional range — from total jubilation to extreme sorrow. It's about team effort. Survival is why we are here."