



Hope Shines Brightly as Celebration on the Hill Ends

Progressively chillier breezes did nothing to cool the enthusiasm of the thousands of cancer survivors and their supporters converged on Washington's National Mall for [Celebration on the Hill](#) Wednesday evening. As the sun set over the Washington Monument and darkness approached, many in the crowd kept warm by walking the Relay For Life track around the Capitol Reflecting Pool and grooving to tunes performed by dozens of singers and bands on the main stage.

Others wandered through the Wall of Hope, a massive structure on the Mall showcasing 5,000 banners signed by millions of Relay For Life participants and supporters around the United States. Exactly how massive? If each of the banners were placed end to end, they would stretch 85 times the length of the Washington Monument, organizers say.

"It's been awe-inspiring," said Paul Richards, a survivor of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. He came from Massachusetts as a Celebration "Ambassador," tasked with pressing members of Congress to increase funding for cancer research and programs. "It is amazing seeing all these names, but it shouldn't be surprising. *Everybody* has been touched by cancer."

Even people who weren't participating in the event found inspiration in the Wall of Hope.

"It's powerful," said Modya Silver, who was visiting Washington from Toronto and stumbled upon the display while sightseeing. "Its impact grows as you walk down from the entrance."

"It's the reaction Celebration organizers were counting on.

"The Relay For Life Wall of Hope represents the hope that those lost to cancer will never be forgotten, that those who face cancer will be supported, and that one day, cancer will be eliminated," said Dan Smith, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network's (ACS CAN) national vice president of federal and government relations. ACS CAN, a sister organization of the American Cancer Society, organized Celebration on the Hill.

"Tonight our Wall of Hope represents our commitment, our passion, our determination, and most importantly, our unified message of hope," Smith declared as a huge spotlight in the center of Wall was illuminated. This "Beam of



Hope," as organizers have dubbed it, adds another dimension by sending the beacon several hundred feet in the air for people to see all around the District of Columbia.

A Sea of Lights

A more poignant display of light as a symbol of hope took place at the end of the evening, when an estimated 17,000 luminaria were lit.

Throughout the day, American Cancer Society volunteers and staff had been filling white paper bags with sand and



Celebration on the Hill

a tea light and lining them up 7 deep along the steps surrounding the Capitol Reflecting Pool. Each bag, purchased by people attending Celebration on the Hill, bore the name of someone fighting cancer or someone who had lost their battle with the disease; some also carried personal messages of love and remembrance.

The ceremony is a standard feature of Relay For Life rallies everywhere. In DC, the lighting of the luminaria served as an emotional capstone for the 2-day event and was greatly anticipated by many participants. As with many Celebration activities, the luminaria event had an impact well beyond its physical location. For Wendy Herbst it was part of her plan. The Wallingford, Connecticut, resident was planning to light her luminaria at the same time as her husband and 2 daughters lit candles in a parallel ceremony back home.

The crowd, boisterous during most of the day, grew reflective as the

candles were lit. Many were moved to tears.

A Matter of Commitment

The evening ended with inspiring words from John Seffrin, PhD, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. Calling the event a milestone in cancer advocacy, he thanked the thousands of participants for their commitment.

"You made a real and lasting difference for our cause," he said, noting that every member of Congress had been visited and 310 had signed the Congressional Cancer Promise. "You put faces on cancer -- the faces of the people who are living with it and the faces of the people who have devoted their lives to eliminating it. How could such a feat fail to have enormous political potential?"

Survivors like Paul Richardson are counting on that.



"This country can do amazing things, anything it commits its mind to and its resources to," he said. "In 2015 my grandson will be 10 years old and my hope and my prayer and what I'm working for is that he never has to deal with this disease."



Top Fundraisers	
1.	Anna DeMarco
2.	Jennifer Palladino
3.	AUGUSTINO PALLADINO
4.	Laura Spencer
5.	Susan Carey

Team Rank	
1.	RELAY FOR JENNY
2.	The Run For Your Life Dawgs
3.	Super Sports Moms
4.	Candice's Crew
5.	The Nerd Herd

Money to Date:
\$3,940
Goal:
\$100,000

Prostate Cancer Survivor Finds the 'Hope' in Hope Lodge

At 51, Skip Learned is the poster boy for a healthy lifestyle. He plays tennis twice a week, lifts weights, and works full time as a facilities manager for the public schools in Barrington, Rhode Island, where he lives. He's also a husband and father of 2 teenagers.

Learned has always been in good shape, so when his physical last June detected an elevated [PSA level](#), a possible sign of [prostate cancer](#), he didn't worry too much. He was convinced a consultation with a urologist would reveal some mistake with the original test results.

"I thought, there's no way that I could have cancer," Learned recalls. "Then when I had the biopsy, there it was. That was a shock."

Investigating Treatment Options

Although his urologist suggested surgical treatment, Learned was put off by the possible side effects, which can include incontinence and impotence. He and his wife Betsy began researching other treatment options.

They turned first to the Internet, then sought insight from people around them.

"I found that as I spoke to friends and acquaintances, everyone knew somebody who was hit by this, so I used that a little bit," Learned says. "And then we went to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and met with 3 doctors there, with 3 different approaches."

Ultimately, Learned decided a radiation facility in Atlanta had the treatment approach that best suited him. He would first receive radioactive seed implants, followed by 7 weeks of external radiation therapy.

Commuting Out of the Question

There was just one problem: Atlanta is nearly 1,000 miles away from Barrington.

Commuting was not an option. And with Learned's wife working full time, his son beginning high school, and his daughter beginning college, taking the whole family South wasn't realistic either. Learned was going to have to go it alone.

But his earlier research paid off. A man he contacted for a reference for his Atlanta physicians told him about [Hope Lodge](#), the American Cancer Society's free housing centers for cancer patients in treatment. There are 22 Hope Lodges throughout the United States. Learned immediately got on the waiting list for the one in Atlanta.

It took several weeks for a spot to open up; until then, Learned stayed in a hotel. Although he joined a local gym and even managed to find some tennis partners, he still felt isolated.

"I was in a strange city where I knew no one and I was by myself and my treatment was 15 minutes a day and that was the only thing I had to do," he recalls. "It was very lonely."

That all changed when Learned moved into Hope Lodge for the final 3 weeks of his treatment.

"Everybody there was so friendly," he says. "It's an incredible place."

The Lodge has private bedrooms and bathrooms for guests, but communal areas for cooking, eating and socializing. That design encourages guests to get to know each other, Learned says. He quickly met other men at the Lodge who were also being treated for prostate cancer and found it helpful to compare notes with them as his radiotherapy progressed.



No Lamborghinis Needed

His treatments completed, Learned returned home just before Thanksgiving. At first he struggled to get back into his usual routine. The radiation therapy left him tired, and some urinary side effects developed that had not been a problem during treatment.

Time is improving his physical condition, though, and Learned is again doing all the things he used to do. What's changed is his attitude, a shift he attributes partly to his stay at Hope Lodge.

"Something like this really makes you appreciate everything," he says. "Life is the most precious thing. It doesn't have to be life with a Lamborghini, it just has to be life."

Laughing, he adds, "Though life with a Lamborghini wouldn't be bad!"

Now that he's home, Learned says he plans to get involved with the American Cancer Society on multiple levels.

"For one thing, I'm going to refocus my charitable donations, because now I know firsthand where the money goes -- at least some of it. And it's going to a really good place."

A Note From the Web...

The Networks of QNGAZ.com have announced that they will once again be covering this year's event. Reporters from QuickNews Live (QNGAZ.com), Smithtown Radio (SmithtownRadio.com) and The Matador Online (TheMatadorOnline.com), will be combining resources to bring the event to the web through videos, photos and text. The site will also be hosting this newsletter in a digital format. Highlights from Smithtown's first Relay for Life can be found by accessing either one of the sites or on the Relay for Life of Smithtown webpage at <http://acsevents.org/relay/ny/smithtown>. In the coming weeks,



From The Matador:

Relay for Life returns to SHS East

by Lauren

After hosting a successful Relay for Life (RFL) at Smithtown High School East this past June, students are once again gearing up to raise money for the American Cancer Society (ACS). Though the overnight event will take place in June of 2007, planning has already begun.

Over the past few months, the steering committee, which consists of people involved last year who are planning again this year, has met regularly to discuss RFL '07. In the first few meetings of the RFL steering committee, goals set include raising \$100,000, registering 150 teams, and finding 30 sponsors. Last year, the event raised a net profit of \$74,000 for the ACS. Students, teachers, parents, and members of the community all attended RFL, and a total of 101 teams consisting of 999 people were registered to participate.

In addition to these goals, RFL steering committee members have also proposed themes for the event. The current theme being considered is entitled "Decades of Hope." For this theme, every hour of the event will be a different decade, and music from that decade will be performed by bands or played by the DJ.



Photo: Lauren

Relay for Life 2006, pictured above, was a great success last year, and the SHS East steering committee is already hard at work planning for RFL 2007.

Currently, the event is still in the early stages of development, and many committee positions need to be filled. Throughout the year, students are

encouraged to participate in RFL planning, whether by creating a team or joining a committee. Committees help to organize activities, book bands, get sponsors, raise money, recruit teams, find cancer survivors to speak, and perform a plethora of other tasks.

To get involved with RFL, students may attend the monthly meetings or speak to Mr. Menendez or Mr. Cummings. Menendez and Cummings are organizing RFL at the high school level for the second year in a row. Another person students may speak to about getting involved is Gail Tuohey who is the director of East's RFL. He can be reached by email at Gail.tuohey@cancer.org.

Signs are posted throughout SHS East stating when the next RFL meetings are taking place. All meetings take place at 7:00 p.m. in the Commons Cafeteria at SHS East. All members of the Smithtown community are welcome to attend.

In the upcoming weeks, a Web site for Smithtown's RFL will be available with more information. Go to www.cancer.org and click on the Relay for Life link to search for local Relays and get involved.

Article By: Lauren Weiss

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Keep an eye out for the April Edition of The Matador



Relay for Life of Smithtown Online:
<http://acsevents.org/relay/ny/smithtown>