

WHY I RELAY

In previous years, I have supported Relay for Life by buying luminarias in memory of my mother-in-law, Mona Ow, who lost her life to cancer on Feb. 14, 1991. About 3 years ago, I got the urge to do something more substantial. I wanted to get a team together but I never took the plunge, until this year. My sister, Connie Orozco, who has participated as a walker in previous years, encouraged me to set the team up and offered to be a co-captain. It is a little easier when you have someone to share the work. My brother-in-law, Gilbert Ow, put up the initial \$200.00 to get the space and we were off and running. Since our space is dedicated to the memory of my mother-in-law, I hope to get every member of my immediate family to walk this year. I'm sure it will be an experience we will never forget.

- Alicia Ow

It is all about the people I have known in my life who have battled cancer. First was my Grandfather who the doctors said simply had a cold that would not go away. I was there the day the ambulance came to pick him up and race him to the hospital because he could not breathe. The surgeon who tried to operate said he was so full of cancer that there was nothing he could do. I was 5 the day they took him away and I still remember it.

Then there was my 21 year old cousin, Caroline, who battled a brain tumor and lost. My Aunt Sis who helped me financially when I moved from Ohio to California - she won her battle with breast cancer only to die from ALS. Becky Cherne, who tirelessly devoted her later years to walking spiritually with people coming into the Catholic Faith, and died of liver cancer. We called her Becky del Sasso for all the time she volunteered at Madonna Del Sasso. Rosalie McCoun who successfully battled melanoma as a young mother, became the relay coordinator and a spiritual director at Madonna del Sasso, only to battle melanoma again in the middle of her life and lose that battle. Yvonne Wolfe and Dominic Donatoni and Sue Arnaldo and Marsha Seiling - all wonderful people who made life special for any one who knew them. Tommy Tanimura, who for years quietly battled prostate cancer and kept on working almost to the very end. He died last year shortly before the Relay for Life event.

This year, most especially, for Cathy Bonus who died on March 19, the Feast day of St. Joseph. She battled 3 cancers over a 16-year period. She was one of the most vivacious, life-loving people I have ever met. She and her family along with mine have spent Father's day weekend camping at Yosemite for 20 years. She had one of those laughs and voices that you could pick out in a crowded airport. Cancer silenced her.

Then there are those still battling the disease or who have battled it and won, like Cheryl Ward Kaiser and Sue Antle and Mary Donatoni and Gil Mullen. With their upbeat positive spirits, they give me hope and inspire me to keep on fighting to find a cure.

- Priscilla Jackson, Team Tanimura & Antle

My involvement with Relay for Life came about quite unexpectedly. While I had heard of the event, I had never had any real reason to attend, let alone participate. That changed when a dear friend and cancer survivor, Teri Taormina suggested we start a school team. In order to celebrate Teri's remission, we started our small but mighty team seven years ago. As my adopted grandmother Agnes Gomes began her second battle against this dreaded disease the following year, my involvement became even more meaningful.

Watching these two courageous and remarkably strong women in their struggles was more than enough to motivate me to join the fight for a cure. While Teri perseveres, my grandmother lost her battle, making the meaning of why I Relay even more poignant. I Relay for those who can't walk the walk any longer, for those who were dear to me and are not here any longer, and for those who are close to my heart and still fighting the fight. Relay for Life has become a passion for me, not simply a weekend affair culminating months of planning. It is a way of life, a conscious choice on my part to strive to make a differ-

ence, to work unceasingly for a cure, to continue the battle for those who have lost their own.

I would challenge others to look beyond the requests for donations, look beyond all the purple decorations and see the faces of those that we are working so hard for - faces of young and old, men and women, family and friends. For it is these faces that are the faces of Relay for Life. I am but one person joining with countless others to keep the work moving forward so that one day cancer will truly be a disease of the past. That in itself is more than enough of a reason for me to Relay!

- Jessica Clary, La Gloria School

My wife, Jennifer Dizon, always had her yearly mammogram done close to or around her birthday so that she will not forget to schedule it.

I was out of the country attending my high school class reunion in May of 1998 when she received the phone call from our family doctor that she needs to schedule a second mammogram because she saw some calcifications that were clustered in one area.

She waited for me to come back the following week to talk to the surgeon Dr. Bernadette Guiroy per our family doctor's request to come to the office and we should both talk to her about the results of the second mammogram. Nobody in her family ever had a history of cancer and it just broke her heart when she heard the word "breast cancer." She was diagnosed with this "cancer" on her 48th birthday.

She tried to be physically strong while the physician told her to explore the possibilities of lumpectomy versus total radical mastectomy, radiation, chemotherapy, etc., etc. Before we left the office the surgeon told us to think about it, she does not have to make a decision right away. Dr. Guiroy made us feel a little better when she said that "cancer does not mean a death sentence, if it is caught early enough the chance of survival is very high".

She read books, watched videos on breast cancer and anything she can get her hands on so that she knows more about this disease. The following week she made a decision to go for the total radical mastectomy because she did not want to go under the knife just to find out later that the cancer has spread to her lymph nodes and other areas and then go in again for a second surgery. The surgery went for 4 hours and she was out of the hospital the following day with no complications.

The Pathology Report came back and the size of the cancer was small enough that she did not even need radiation, because she dreaded the idea of having it done five days a week for 6 weeks. The recovery went well except for

the limited use of her right arm such as driving, getting dress, cooking but she was doing it all slowly and she was back at work after six weeks. She was put on Tamoxifen for five years which is a lot better than chemo or radiation in my opinion.

My daughters were only 12 and 14 at that time and they were still in junior high school. There was nothing in world that she wanted except for her to be around and see them grow up become independent and responsible adults. Now, Stephanie is 23, she is doing graduate studies for her MBA in Business Management and Pharmacy and Michelle is 20 a junior in college going for her Business Degree in Accounting.

My wife's wish to beat the cancer came true and I am proud to say that she was also able to retire from the Federal Service after 34 years of service last March 2, 2007. - Mon Dizon

As with most people, I have relatives and friends who've been diagnosed with cancer over the years. One relative in particular, was my dear cousin Marie, who battled her cancer for over six years before succumbing to it in 1999. The courage she exhibited during her illness is what inspired me to get involved and stay active in the Salinas Relay.

I recall that during the first Relay in Salinas, I sat with her as she was recovering from a recent chemo treatment, while her husband went to the track to be part of the event and especially to see the Luminarias. She wanted so much to be there and witness the first event, but was too weak from the effects of the chemo.

Marie was a vibrant professional woman here in Salinas, who enjoyed all that life brought her way and did everything she could to beat this disease including the use of some experimental medications. She never complained, even during the toughest of times. She was my hero, and I told her so.

Cancer doesn't discriminate as to "who" will get the diagnosis or when, and my sincere hope is that I will be able to witness the cure for this disease within my lifetime, so that I'll know that my efforts will have helped make a difference. This is why I Relay..... - Liz Silva

When I look around the dinner table and realize at least one of my family members will have some form of cancer; that's enough to make me Relay.

I've lost my maternal grandmother, two paternal aunts and one paternal cousin.

Currently, another paternal aunt is in treatment for her cancer. The cancer rate is so high in our family, so I Relay in memory of the ones we have lost and for the hope of a cure. A cure means my

3 young nieces will not have to look around the dinner table and have the same feeling in the pit of their stomach that I do.

With the recent death of my Cousin Mary, I was compelled to do more than just be "part" of a team. I decided to share my passion for fundraising with others and "lead" a team. I have created Team Quackin' For a Cure (the Flores Family & Friends). I set an aggressive goal for our first year of \$12,500 and 25 team members. We have raised over \$3,500 so far and are at 33 confirmed walkers so far—we have 2 tents now and might need 3!

My niece 12-year old niece, Mikailah, was the first to jump on the fundraising bandwagon for our team. She has already raised over \$500 selling adopt-a-rubber duckies. She recently told me that she is so happy to be helping out with Relay and fundraising to find a cure for cancer.

My other 12 year-old niece, Janeeva, found out we were selling duckies and wanted to know if she could sell some. She is in Illinois, so I figured I would just send her 10 duckies. I also sent her and her 13-year old sister, Janessa, our famous duckie baseball caps. Upon receipt of the package, both girls put on their duckie hats, walked around the neighborhood and sold out of ducks! Again, they both shared how great it is to raise money for cancer, AND, they said it was fun!

The passion I have for this event is surrounding me and it is becoming very contagious. Every day another blessing comes through for our team. I have rounded up friends, family, and people who didn't know about Relay to walk, donate their time, provide supplies, and give their energy. My most recent call was from a young girl named, Chantal. She called to share her excitement about selling 7 adopt-a-ducks that day. I asked her how she felt, and she said, "Good!"

As we the Salinas Relay For Life celebrates "A Decade of Hope," I encourage each and every person reading this to consider joining us (yes, we are still accepting walkers on our team!) You don't have to walk, just come out and see what it's all about! Look for the team wearing yellow duck hats and quacking! Once you see the fun, and the camaraderie built for a common cause, you too will want to help find a CURE. Remember, the only difference between CARE and a CURE is "U!"

- Julie Grant, Team Captain, Quackin' For A Cure

I have many reasons for participating in ACS' RFL with several friends, family, and colleagues being directly impacted by cancer. My primary reason is for my Mom, who has been fighting uterine for more than 6 years and has recently taken a turn for the worse. In recent months I have been spending most of my free time and lunch hours with her as much as possible; feeding, comforting, and letting her know I'm there.

In past relays I have dedicated Luminarias in honor of cancer survivors and fighters including my mom. Today I'm faced with the possibility of having to dedicate a Luminaria in memory of my mom and can only imagine the countless others standing at the same crossroads. With so many individuals being impacted by this deadly disease, my hopes as a regular participant of RFL is to witness the gradual increase of Luminarias displayed in honor of survivors instead of those in memory of loved ones lost. Finding a cure will someday save families the grief too often associated with this terrible disease.

"Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared..."

- Eddie Takashima, Team Tanimura & Antle

I attended my first Relay For Life event six years ago and I have been hooked on Relay ever since! For several years, I was approached by Relay for Life volunteers seeking donations for their teams. They told me their Relay stories and encouraged me to "drop by the track" and see what Relay for Life is all about. So, for years I donated to their Relay teams, learned a little more about Relay from their stories and replied to invitations to attend the event with, "I'm really going to try and come by this year". Three years went by and I still had not made it to the track. Then, one day at work, a co-worker expressed concern that her Relay team was disbanding. She wanted to stay involved in Relay and was looking for a new team. Together we decided to form an office team, and in 2002, I finally made it to the track! The effect was life changing.

I Relay for many reasons. I Relay in memory of the friends and family I have lost from cancer. I Relay so that someday the words, "you have cancer" do not have the gut wrenching impact that they do today. I Relay because great strides have been made in cancer research and more people are surviving the disease every year. Ultimately, I Relay because we need to find the elusive cure for cancer that we have been chasing for decades.

Relay provides the opportunity to gather as a community and honor those who have lost their lives to cancer, pay tribute to those who continue their fight, and celebrate those who have won their battle. Relay is filled with many memorable moments. Two events are my favorite: the survivor walk and luminaria ceremony. I always enjoy standing at the track as cancer survivors take their "victory lap", applauding their success and admiring their strength. I am always touched walking the candlelit track in the late evening, quietly acknowledging the names on luminarias, remembering those who have lost their lives to cancer.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the US. It accounts for 1 in every 4 deaths. In 2007, over 2.5 million new cases of cancer are expected to be diagnosed. All of us are touched by cancer in some form or another because a cancer diagnosis affects not only the patient, but their family and friends as well. It can strike any one of us at any time. Significant progress has been made in the fight against cancer, but we have a lot more work to do, and we need more funds to do it.

The money we raise for Salinas Relay for Life benefits our local community, funding needed services for advocacy and support. Relay donations provide educational services to patients and loved ones, making it easier to face the reality of a new or scary situation and providing them with the resources they need to make informed choices about their treatment. Every Relay dollar brings us closer to a cure.

If you have not yet attended the Salinas Relay for Life, please do so. You will be astounded at the compassion, the generosity and the spirit of this community in its fight against cancer. We

will win this battle some day. We will find a cure for cancer. So please, do "drop by the track" and see what Relay is all about. You will not be disappointed. - Robin Pearce, Ryan McDonald & Kincheloe

Twelve years ago, when my father was diagnosed I didn't really know what cancer was. Of course I had heard of it, and I knew it was bad... but I didn't really know what it was. Today, I know more than I wish I did. I know that my father's form of cancer was preventable, and I know that if he had listened to his body a little earlier and detected the disease earlier, there is a good chance it would have been treatable. He was given 2 years to live and just about made it 2 years.

The year my father lost his battle with cancer, I was invited to "walk the track" with some friends during the Luminaria ceremony at Hartnell. I was so moved by the ceremony - what a great opportunity to pay tribute to my father, his life, and his battle. If you have not attended one of these ceremonies you may have a hard time understanding my experience, but as I walked, I grieved and I celebrated. I grieved my loss, yet I celebrated what was going on around me. I was surrounded by people walking a track in the middle of the night to make a difference in the lives of cancer patients. My community - working as one to make a difference in so many lives - here in Salinas and around the world. I was hooked and became an American Cancer Society volunteer. My American Cancer Society passion is Relay For Life.

I Relay to help raise money to be used to educate people about cancer prevention and early detection. I Relay to do what I can to eliminate cancer.

- Deb Ajeska

I have been an Obstetrician /Gynecologist in Salinas for almost 13 years. Many people ask me, "Why did I choose this particular specialty?" My answer is always the same, "For the most part, I see happy, healthy women!" I also like the fact that most of the issues my patients bring up at the office are usually short term problems and are easily treated either medically or surgically.

Cancer, unfortunately, is not one of those issues that are easily treated or short term. Most adults, including myself, have experienced cancer within their families or close circle of friends. We all know it takes a unique individual to accept the diagnosis of cancer and be able to move forward with their life that has just changed with the utterance of the words "you have cancer." Diagnosing cancer at early or non-invasive stages help those individuals move forward toward an eventual cure.

Over the past decade, screening tests for cervical cancer (PAP smears), breast cancer (mammography) and follow-up guidelines have become more efficient in diagnosing abnormalities before they

become invasive cancers. Thus making treatment less invasive, recovery shorter and the outlook for cure brighter. The money raised through Relay For Life assures continued funding for research and treatment development and hopefully one day a cure for cancer.

I Relay for my family and friends, and for my patients who have battled or who are still battling cancer. I Relay for my daughters who volunteer at the survivor check-in and dinner and hopefully come away with a sense of community spirit and survivor support. Last, but not least, I relay for my sister, who has been on the Relay For Life executive committee for the past three years and was recently diagnosed and treated for a non-invasive cancer.

- Shelley N. Goodwein, M.D., Salinas Women's Care, Inc.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of RFL Salinas 2007, we once again embrace HOPE. Appropriately, the theme of this year's event is "Celebrating a Decade of Hope." Everyone is involved in Relay for Life for vari-

ous reasons. Most people have been touched by cancer in one way or another. Both my parents and numerous relatives have died to cancer. My husband and father-in-law are cancer survivors. I have too many reasons not to be involved with Relay For Life!

Without hope, we feel helpless. Relay For Life offers the hope we need to feel empowered in the fight against cancer. We ban together as friends, families and one community and refuse to let cancer beat us. Together we fight for cancer research, patient services, legislative action and education to help reduce cancer occurrences. This is not a fight that will be victorious in one day, one year or one decade. This is an ongoing battle until the day we hear "there is a cure for cancer!"

My personal experience with Relay For Life and the people who are involved has had a tremendous impact on my life and my family. I have never met people who are more passionate than Relay For Life volunteers! I had the privilege of meeting RFL volunteers in Australia last year and they were awesome. Their dedication and passion reminded me of our Salinas community. Cancer knows no boundaries - ethnicity, age or your zip code - these do not matter. What does matter is the HOPE we all provide by continuing to support Relay For Life and the American Cancer Society.

I "Relay" for my parents, relatives, Rick, Mel, Wylie Howard, friends ... I "Relay" for my daughters, and our future generations. I "Relay" in hope that one day cancer will be eliminated from our vocabulary. If you don't feel hopeless, you won't feel helpless! RELAY ON!

- Kathy Pimentel

I have been a Salinas grown native all my life. This will be my 5th year participating in Relay For Life. When I began this journey it was for 3 of my friends from work. One is a coworker who survived the battle of lung cancer and the other two are members at a Country Club I work at. With their support and enthusiasm I have been blessed to be a part of a community that has a tremendous CAN DO ATTITUDE! In December 2005 a former team mate was diagnosed with lung cancer. The news was that immediate surgery was needed but part of the problems related to it and the extent of it were going to be a battle for her and her family. Since I have known this woman to be a strong, energetic and faithful person I knew she would win this battle. As her recovery has taken her family on a roller coaster ride of ups and downs and full of emotions, she actually is known at the hospital for being THE MIRACLE LADY. As her recovery became lengthened by little setbacks she strives to move forward. I spoke to her on the phone one day and she told me, I told those doctors, "I walked into this hospital and I am walking out". She choose not to have many visitors but informed me of the countless gatherings that there would be in her new home once she got out. If anyone in my life has shown how fast and hard this ugly disease

can be, Linda's illness is that very one to top the list. This brave woman and her entire family have been thru so much in the last year and a half and she continues to smile bright and not let it get her. The hardest and most enduring time for me was when I was allowed to go in and see her while she was in ICU. Her husband Benji told them I WAS family. Linda had a tracheotomy at the time but when she saw me all she could do was smile and put her arms out to me and whisper to me that she loved me. She never skipped a beat...and today she still doesn't.

This woman's courageous battle and struggles have made my reasons to Relay much stronger and close to the heart for me this year and all the years to come. My list of reasons to Relay in the past 5 years has grown. My stepfather Allen has fought and won the battle of cancer, my close friend and sponsor fought and won the battle of ovarian cancer, and my grandfather, Clyde Potter's last days were plagued by leukemia cancer which ended his long life of 91 years. He couldn't talk in his last days because of the medications but I got to listen to him peacefully sleeping and tell him I loved him one last time

