

## Relay for Life: a celebration of life, a fight for the cure

Written by Jes-c Brandt

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Numbers were down, but enthusiasm and fund raising remained high in Phillips County's eighth Relay for Life. Getting into the theme 'Back to the Future,' a total of 13 teams gathered Friday, Aug. 21 to kick off the 18-hour event.

In the months leading up to the Relay and during the event itself, teams worked hard raising money for the American Cancer Society. By Saturday at noon, Phillips County had raised \$38,325, an impressive amount despite fewer teams.

Teams sported costumes from the past, ranging from cavemen to characters from the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. Regardless of their decade, however, everyone had one thing on their mind as they were welcomed to the Relay: cancer.

Emcees George Mumma and Marcus Kammer welcomed survivors, teams, volunteers and guests to the Relay site, thanking everyone for their involvement in the county event and their dedication to the quest to beat cancer.

Following the powerful tradition, cancer survivors took the track, making their way around the courthouse in a 'victory lap.' Friends and loved ones lined the walkway, showing their encouragement. Many family members and friends were seen walking together and releasing their purple balloons, with the memory of fighting their cancer together fresh in their minds.

Next to circle the track were the teams. Team members, many dressed for the occasion, carried banners and signs proclaiming their theme, as well as team events to happen throughout the night.

Team-organized events slated for the evening included everything from dance contests and Rockband to bra burning and jawbone pitching. Several teams cooked up tasty treats to keep walkers going and to continue to raise funds for the American Cancer Society.

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Once teams and survivors were recognized, individuals from every team began their long walk. Speaking this year was Tim Byers, who is the associate dean at the Colorado School of Public Health and the interim director at University of Colorado's Cancer Center. Amy Kropp also spoke, sharing her story as a cancer survivor.

As always, Relay for Life offered much entertainment throughout the evening for spectators and walkers. New this year was Relay's Got Talent, a time for local talent to show Relayers what they could do. There were several musical entrees, as well as gymnastics and a performance by Holyoke High School cheerleaders.

Back by popular demand was Relay's musical chairs scavenger hunt. After members from each team raced about the site looking for various 'Back to the Future' items, it came down to two contenders. Shelby Knode took first place, and Melissa Mayden came in second.



Every year team activities are paused as the Relay takes a moment to honor and remember those affected by cancer. Luminaria dedicated in memory of those lost to cancer and in honor of those still fighting the disease line the track. During the luminaria ceremony the candles are lit and the names are read. This year 391 luminaria were dedicated.

Even as the activity ceased, dedicated team members circled the track throughout the night, until morning came. Pastor Paul Sung led a morning prayer, as campsites once again came to life and activities resumed.

After a long, but satisfying night, teams and individuals were honored for a number of accomplishments. Individuals who stayed at the Relay for the entire 18 hours were entered in a drawing to win various prizes. Karen Bateman and Jan Workman each won two tickets to Elitches, and Dixie Nicholas won two tickets to a Nuggets game.

The team making top fund raising efforts was Walkin' & Rockin'. Best campsite went to the

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Cavemen. Wilber's Warriors had the best cancer related theme, and the best team costume prize went to Life of the Party. Phillips County Hippies had the best team activity with their putt-putt golfing.

New this year is an award for the best relay baton. Each team makes a relay baton to represent their team. This year's winner was PC Telcom's light-up guitar baton. A traveling trophy will be the winning team's for the year, until a new baton wins the prize at the following Relay.

Team fund raising is as follows:

Wilber's Warriors, \$2,227; Cavemen I, \$3,740.75; Cavemen II, \$3,740.75; Bank of Colorado, \$1,742.84; PC Telcom, \$1,539.75; Phillips County Hippies, \$1,414; Home Town Team, \$1,250.16; Owens Family, \$1,605.21; Haxtun Lions, \$1,225; Life of the Party, \$1,213.26; Haxtun/Fleming Herald and Hofmeisters I, \$2,571.80; Haxtun/Fleming Herald and Hofmeisters II, \$2,571.80; Points West, \$1,399; Walkin' & Rocking', \$2,726.13; and FCCLA, \$1,030.