

2010 Relay For Life celebrates birthdays

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

While some are thinking, "Relay just can't be here yet!" many cancer survivors and Relay team members are busy preparing for the ninth annual Phillips County Relay For Life. The "12 Hour Birthday Bash" kicks off Friday, June 4 at 6 p.m. at the Courthouse Square in Holyoke.

Relay's goal this year is to help celebrate more birthdays, and sponsors and team members are doing just that by raising money for the American Cancer Society and cancer research.

This year, team members will walk for 12 hours, from 6 p.m. Friday to 6 a.m. Saturday. Another change from last year is that the stage will be located on the north side of the Courthouse on Emerson Street.

Festivities kick off at 6 p.m. with a welcome from Phillips County Relay committee chairmen Doug Kamery and Steve Young as well as emcees Joe Hall and Marcia Dalton. Pastor Lou Encinias will give the invocation, and the national anthem will be sung.

Cancer survivors and care givers are then invited to walk the "Victory Lap" around the Courthouse Square, followed by the releasing of balloons and a survivor group picture.

Team participants, all decked out with themed costumes and props, will take the next lap for the team parade. The end of the parade marks the official start of the Relay, and one member from each team must be walking at all times for the remainder of the 12 hours.

A 7 p.m. dinner will be served to all Relay team members, sponsors and cancer survivors.

Guest speaker Carlos Estrada from the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network will take the stage to speak on advocacy.

Also on the main stage, Relay participants, survivors and observers can watch local

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entertainment from 7:15-9 p.m. Friday.

Relay activities will take a break from 9-9:45 p.m. for the Luminaria Ceremony. "In Memory of" and "In Honor of" readings will take place followed by a silent memory lap. (Luminaria can be purchased prior to Relay or from 3-8 p.m. at the Courthouse on Friday.)

The highly anticipated "Caked," sponsored by the Grainland team, will take place at 9:45 p.m., and one community member will find themselves getting a cake in the face. Musical chairs scavenger hunt will follow.

This year's Relay youth area will host games and activities from around 11 p.m. to midnight.

The rest of the night and early morning hours will feature upbeat team building activities interspersed with quiet times for those who want to enjoy the serenity of the Relay.

Entertainment, games and activities will be sponsored by Relay teams at individual campsites. Other challenges for Relay participants include the M&M relay, a sack lunch relay, the not-so-newlywed game and the reverse wheelchair race. Watch for times to sign up for these events.

Team members are encouraged to stay at the Relay the entire 12 hours. For those that last through the night, a breakfast will be available for teams, sponsors and survivors at 6 a.m.

After clean-up, closing ceremonies will begin at 7 a.m. Saturday. Cancer survivors will be special guests, and individuals and teams will be recognized for their efforts. Awards will be given for team parade entries, campsites, team spirit, most money raised by teams/individuals, team batons and cake decorating.

Pastor Chad Rozelle will give the benediction, and team members and survivors will take their final lap, concluding this year's Relay For Life and birthday bash.

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Don't forget the Relay store will be open Friday and Saturday. Community members are also reminded pets are not allowed at the Relay.