

Relay for Life celebrates 25 years

Written by Darci Tomky

This year marks Relay for Life's 25th anniversary, and Phillips County is joining in on the tradition with the Aug. 21-22 event at the Phillips County Courthouse.

The annual Relay is one way community members honor cancer survivors, pay tribute to the lives lost to the disease and raise money to help fight it. People around the country unite in more than 4,800 Relays each year.

American Cancer Society's Relay for Life began in Tacoma, Wash. as the City of Destiny Classic 24-Hour Run Against Cancer. Dr. Gordy Klatt, a colorectal surgeon from Tacoma decided to personally raise money for the fight against cancer by doing something he enjoyed—running.

Klatt ran more than 83 miles in the 24-hour run, raising \$27,000 as friends paid \$25 to run or walk 30 minutes with him. While circling the track, he envisioned how a team relay event could be used to raise money for cancer, and since then millions have joined the cause around the world.

Relay for Life found its way to Phillips County eight years ago. While some were skeptical about walking laps for 18 hours, the excitement of the event caught on, and now community members look forward to the annual event that includes not only walking, but also game show entertainment, crazy costumes and just about anything else you can think of.

Participating teams have spent the months leading up to the Relay raising money for the American Cancer Society. The teams will come together for the 18-hour event with the goal of having at least one person from each team walking at all times.

Traditional Relay events will be incorporated including the survivor's victory lap, the luminaria ceremony and the parade of teams and sponsors. Relay's Got Talent is a new activity set to debut at this year's Relay.

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Relay goes “Back to the Future”

Phillips County’s Relay for Life kicks off Friday evening, Aug. 21 with a “Back to the Future” theme. Emcees Marcus Kammer and George Mumma will welcome Relay participants at the main stage at 6 p.m. Also in the opening ceremony, Pastor Gary Rahe will give the invocation, and Equally Delinquent will sing the national anthem.

At 6:15, cancer survivors and care givers are invited to walk the “Victory Lap” around the courthouse square, followed by the releasing of balloons and a survivor group picture. Relay participants and sponsors will take a lap in the team parade. The end of the parade marks the official start of the Relay, and one member of each team will start walking.

A 7 p.m. dinner will be served to all Relay team members, sponsors and cancer survivors while program notes are addressed at the main stage. After that a presentation will be made by Tim Byers, MD, MPH, the associate dean at the Colorado School of Public Health and the interim director at University of Colorado’s Cancer Center.

Everyone is invited to join in on the lap activities and lap dancing from 7:30-7:50 p.m. Next head over to the main stage to hear from cancer survivor Amy Kropp.

New to this year, Relay’s Got Talent show will take the stage at 8:10 p.m. with a variety of acts that are sure to provide some comical entertainment for Relay participants.

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.

More talent show acts will take place at 9:45 p.m. Stick around for a musical chairs scavenger hunt following the “Back to the Future” theme.

Don’t forget to stop by the Relay store as well as the team campsites. Team activities include:

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Wilbur's Warriors—homemade brats, birthday cake and balloons; Flower Garden (Cavemen for a Cure)—dino toss with prizes awarded all night and jawbone pitching contest from 6-8 p.m. with the winner receiving a homemade cream pie; PCTelcom—Guitar Hero; the Owens Family—face painting; Haxtun/Fleming Herald and Hofmeisters—popcorn; Phillips County Employees (PC Hippies)—miniature golf; Walkin' & Rockin' for a Cure—dance competition at midnight; Grainland Coop (Life of the Party)—Rock Band.

The barbershop quartet Equally Delinquent will be acting as roving troubadours, performing around the campsites during the night.

For those that last through the night, sunrise music will be provided by Star 92.3. At 6 a.m. Pastor Paul Sung will lead the morning prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance will be recited, and breakfast will be available for teams, sponsors and survivors.

Starting at 8 a.m. anyone walking on the track will find themselves in the midst of theme laps and team encouragement activities like the cheese puff toss and the reverse wheelbarrow race. The stage will be open for team use and announcements from 10-10:45 a.m., and team captains are encouraged to announce contest winners at this time.

Cancer survivors will be special guests at the 2009 Relay for Life closing ceremony. Phillips County's Relay accomplishments will be celebrated, and individual teams will be recognized for team spirit, money raised, decorated campsites and parade entries.

Relayers who endured all 18 hours become part of the 18-Hour Relayers Club. At 11:30, club members will have a group picture taken and will be entered in a drawing for a prize.

Pastor Lou Encinias will give the benediction, and team members and survivors will take their final lap, concluding this year's Relay for Life.