

Pace Students Walk for Cancer Research, Administrator at Relay for Life

By Martin Willbur

For many of the more than 500 Pace University students who participated in last weekend's American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, there is usually a personal connection bringing them to the event.

There may have been a relative, a friend or a classmate they have been close with who has been stricken by the disease.

However, for nearly all of those who took part last Friday and Saturday in the fourth annual relay at Pace's Goldstein Fitness Center, there was a member of the school community who has touched--and inspired--almost everyone.

Sue Maxam, the university's director for student success, was diagnosed last summer with Stage 2 breast cancer. While the perpetually upbeat administrator vowed from the day she received her doctor's phone call that she would beat the disease, Maxam said the support shown to her by the school community has lifted her beyond what she thought she could accomplish.

"When I said earlier that I believe it was the support that helped me to recover more so than the surgery and the chemo, I'm not kidding. I really believe that," said Maxam.

Melissa Cardon, one of the faculty organizers of the walk, said since so many of the university's students interact with Maxam, having her attend the event and address the crowd was critical.



MARTIN WILLBUR PHOTO

Students and community members begin the Relay for Life walk at Pace University's Goldstein Fitness Center. Organizers set a goal of raising \$55,000 for the American Cancer Society.

"A lot of them know her and it really did hit home for a lot of them," Cardon said. "My team renamed ourselves for her because we all love her, even before she was battling cancer. It does make it more meaningful, though."

More than 85 teams gathered by 4 p.m. last Friday for the 12-hour walkathon. By the time the event started, \$29,500 was already raised with a goal of reaching \$55,000, said Allyson Dyl, president of

Colleges Against Cancer at Pace, which organizes Relay for Life on college campuses throughout the country.

Money is raised and donated to the American Cancer Society through previous events staged by the teams and through donations. Participants also sold food and tickets for various games and activities. Participants walked on the roughly 1/8-mile walking track above the main gym.

Dyl mentioned that it isn't surprising that Relay for Life has become an important day at Pace.

"Every year we always have a good turnout," she said. "It's our one really main event as a school, so it's something that people look forward to each year."

Sophomore Chris Alessandro has participated in events to fight cancer since a teacher of his in high school passed away. He wasn't going to pass up the chance to participate with members of his Alpha Phi Delta fraternity, one of the 85 teams.

"It's a really touching time," said Alessandro, who was featured on PCTV with Pleasantville Mayor Peter Scherer last week to promote the walkathon. "Everybody just enjoys tonight and we do the best that we can."

Maxam, whose parents and all four grandparents succumbed to the disease, said after her diagnosis, colleagues and students went out of their way to help her and her family to make their lives easier. It is something she vowed to never forget.

"Over the course of the next few months I experienced something that most people don't experience their entire lives--a deep and profound humanity in every single person I encountered as well as people I never met," Maxam said. "Before I had cancer I always thought there was good in everyone but after cancer I'm convinced that everybody at their core is so, so good."



Dining Room



Bathroom