

Cancer walk raises funds, awareness

BY MATTHEW KADOSH

LITTLE FALLS – Throngs of area residents wearing white and pink T-shirts emblazoned with the words "Shag 86 – Life, Hair and Happiness" strolled two miles along Main Street on Sunday morning to raise money for an organization that funds groundbreaking cancer research.



Followed by area residents, Gerald Ferraro, owner of Shag 86, a Little Falls hair salon, leads the third annual Shag 86 walk-a-thon to Benefit the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF). Walkers walked two miles from the salon on Main Street to Route 23 and back.

About 180 people and 20 dogs raised nearly \$7,500 in the third annual Shag 86 walk-a-thon to benefit the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF), Andrew Abramson, co-founder of the foundation said. The goal of the non-profit is to find a cure for breast cancer and the \$2 million they have raised since its start in 2007 has helped researchers make strides in finding treatment for other types of cancer, he said.

The hope is that such research will benefit people like Darlene DiSabatino, 36. The Little Falls resident is battling stage four breast cancer and walked that morning.

"I think there was a great turnout," she said. "It gave me a sense of pride walking through my town with my peers for a cause close to my heart."

Gerald Ferraro, owner of Shag 86, sponsored and helped to organize the walk, which finished at his salon where they held a reception. Ferraro said this year's turnout was better than last year's when it rained. He and his staff held the event because, "We all collectively as a group wanted to give back."

And their efforts were well received.

"We certainly appreciate the support of Gerald for helping us to raise money and spread information," Abramson said.

Renea Shapiro, a township resident whose sister has breast cancer, also walked that day.

"It's wonderful. It's a better turnout than I can imagine," she said, while walking down Main Street. She said comparing the walk to last year, "It's much bigger and every year it will get bigger and bigger."



Cancer is something that all New Jersey residents should be concerned about because of the state's high incidence of the disease, Shapiro said.

According to the American Cancer Society, New Jersey women had the nation's seventh highest incidence of breast cancer in 2007, the most recent year for which data was available - 129.2 cases for every 100,000 women.

"There's no reason we should be the seventh state. We're a garden state," Shapiro said. It's why she plans to write a letter to Gov. Christie asking him to address the matter by assembling a commission of experts who can determine why New Jersey women suffer breast cancer in such high numbers.



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The CBCF, based in Clifton, funds Dr. Larry Norton and his associates' research at the Sloan Kettering Institute. Their work has established that certain gene sets allow cancer cells to spread to specific organs, according to the foundation. The research has also helped to establish better scheduling regimens for several cancer drugs and the CBCF is studying the relationship between osteoporosis and cancer, according to the foundation.

The CBCF will hold its next fundraiser, "The Valley National Bank Breast Cancer Walk," Saturday, Oct. 16 at Valley National Bank's corporate headquarters, 1455 Valley Rd., Wayne.