

Sarah's Soldiers Continue Making Strides Against Breast Cancer

By Kimberly Laro
Sarah's Soldiers

Since 1999, the team known as Sarah's Soldiers has been walking in the annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer event in Concord. As the team has grown in numbers, in strength, and in its involvement with the Making Strides event, it has shared the journeys of many remarkable women and men. These are just a few of them.

During a routine checkup, Bethany Parks' doctor found a lump on her right breast. Breast cancer is in Bethany's family, so she didn't think too much about it as she scheduled her mammogram and ultrasound. Both turned out negative, but because of her family history she was scheduled for a MRI.

The MRI showed that all was fine with the right breast but discovered something on the left breast. She would need to schedule a biopsy.

The results came back, and on the Monday before Thanksgiving Bethany was told she had cancer. Bethany felt bad for the doctor; it must be hard to tell people they have cancer. She thanked the doctor, thanking him for being persistent.

Bethany told herself that cancer is just a word, but she knows that it is more than just a word. "Cancer is so

much more than a word. It's an emotion, it's a reaction, it's a fear, it's an uncertainty, it's an anger, it's enlightening, it's empowering, and it changes lives every day."

Bethany recently addressed team captains at the Team Captain Kick-off, which is the launch of the Making Strides season in Concord. As she started to address the crowd, she caught an image of herself on the screen. It was one of the professional photos she had



Bethany Parks

taken to chronicle her journey through breast cancer. The image is breathtaking; she is beautiful, without hair, holding a bouquet of roses.

Bethany, normally loud and cheerful—*See Soldiers on page 37*

Ribbons from page 35

in Iran, inspired by the song, Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Ole Oak Tree, tied a yellow ribbon around trees in her front yard. News viewers were told that the ribbon represented the desire to see her husband home again.

That yellow ribbon inspired by Lainigen was resurrected for soldiers fighting the Gulf War in 1991. The yellow ribbon inspired AIDS activists to loop a ribbon of red, the color of passion, to represent their cause. Actor Jeremy Irons wore the red ribbon during the Tony Awards, and it caught the attention of the national media. A few months later, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation handed out pink ribbons to participants in its New York City race for breast cancer survivors. In 1992, Self magazine in collaboration with the cosmetic company, Estee Lauder, launched the pink ribbon as an international symbol for breast cancer. The awareness ribbon rapidly became popular with numerous charitable organizations, and the New York Times declared 1992, "The Year of the Ribbon."

As Making Strides participants step onto Memorial Field, they understand they bring their own connection with Making Strides; they may be there to honor lives lost to breast cancer. They may be there after being newly diagnosed with breast cancer. They may be there to offer support to someone they care about who is battling breast cancer. They may be there to celebrate life after breast cancer. We are all walking for different reasons, but the ultimate cause is the same.

As participants stop by the welcome area, they may complete a sticker that says, "I walk in honor of" or "in memory of"; they may put on a survivor sash; but almost everyone stops to take the simple pink awareness ribbon that unites us in our cause.



An all-female US Army Honor Guard will present the colors during the opening ceremonies at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer event in Concord on October 18.

So, there is this pink awareness ribbon, and October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer has its own distinctive ribbon; but what does that mean to you? We know you are aware that there is this disease, breast cancer, that will affect one in every eight women in her lifetime, but we want you to act upon this awareness.

- Join us at Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. Money raised at Making Strides funds cutting-edge research, early detection programs, advocacy, and patient services of the American Cancer Society.

- Get yearly mammograms and clinical breast exams that are vital to detecting breast cancer early when the disease is most treatable. Sign up for mammogram reminder e-mails at Cancer.org. Each year in the month of your choosing, we will send you a free email reminder to "Please, schedule your yearly mammogram today. Be sure to remind the special women in your life to do the same".

- Perform self-breast exams and be aware of any changes in your body.

Remember, behind each awareness ribbon there are countless names of lives affected by breast cancer. Wear your pink ribbon proudly and share your story of why you are making strides against breast cancer.

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