
Group aims to fight ovarian cancer with Edina event

BY Katie Wall - Sun Newspapers

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When her stepmother died of ovarian cancer in 2002, Lisa McLaughlin said she felt the need to be involved in fighting the disease.

Her stepmom, Jane Franczyk, experienced some really vague symptoms of the cancer for about a year and was misdiagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome, McLaughlin said.

"It has some of the same symptoms as ovarian cancer," she added.

So for her fourth year, McLaughlin, along with 2,000 others, will help raise money to combat the disease through the Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance's (MOCA) annual 5-kilometer run and 2-kilometer walk at 9 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 16, at Edina's Rosland Park, 4300 W. 66th St.

MOCA will be taking registrations up to race day. Registration costs \$20 for adults before Sept. 8 and \$25 after that date. Also, children younger than 12 are \$10 before Sept. 8 and \$12 after that day.

Registering before Sept. 8 also guarantees the participant a T-shirt.

"We want to invite the whole community to participate," said McLaughlin, who is the co-president of MOCA. "They do not have to be affected by ovarian cancer, but can come out and just support women who have been touched by the disease."

The run/walk race is the organization's largest fundraiser of the year, according to Jean Heyer of MOCA.

The organization receives the most money through individual pledges and donations, but the group also receives money from corporate sponsors, McLaughlin noted.

"We have definitely been able to fund some interesting research through this race," Heyer said.

In 2005, about 2,000 people participated in the event and raised \$200,000 to support MOCA's mission of funding ovarian cancer research, awareness and supporting women with cancer and their families.

In the past six years, MOCA - which was founded in 1999 - has awarded more than \$1.3 million for research in Minnesota, said McLaughlin.

Ovarian cancer, which is the eighth most common cancer in women, ranks fifth in the cause of cancer deaths in women, according to the American Cancer Society.

"Ovarian cancer is difficult to diagnose," Heyer explained. "About 70 percent of women who are diagnosed are already in the advanced stages of the disease."

Increased waistlines, abdominal pain and changes in bowel or bladder patterns are all symptoms of ovarian cancer, according to MOCA's Web site.

"The symptoms are often mistaken for other gastro-intestinal disorders," Heyer said.

Other signs of the disease might include persistent digestive problems, backaches, excessive fatigue, a change in appetite or abnormal post-menopausal bleeding, states the MOCA Web site.

The American Cancer Society estimates that there will be about 20,000 new cases of ovarian cancer in the country in 2006. About 15,300 women will die of the disease.

Organizers of the run/walk, which loops around Edina's Lake Cornelia, said they hope to raise more than last year's \$200,000.

The race will proceed rain or shine on Sept. 16, Heyer said.

People can register for the race online at www.active.com or call 952-890-8775 for more information.

What: Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance's seventh annual 5K run and 2K walk

When: 9 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 16

Where: Rosland Park, 4300 W. 66th St., Edina.

Cost: \$20 for adults and \$10 for children

Information: www.mnovarian.org

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