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Cancer survivors celebrate life at annual Fox Valley excursion

By Charlotte Norgaard Daily Herald Correspondent *Mon Jun 6, 8:52 AM ET*

Cancer survivor Kay Catlin of St. Charles learned long before her own bout with breast cancer the importance of early detection.

"Back in 1976, my mother was diagnosed with terminal colon cancer, which is very treatable if you catch it on time," she said. "I never got over the fact that it didn't matter what we did, it was only that it was too late."

Catlin, a seven-year breast cancer survivor and one of the co-founders of Two Women For Women, an organization that helps uninsured and underinsured women obtain mammograms, was one of 550 in attendance at Delnor Cancer Survivor Day at Elfstrom Stadium in Geneva.

Delnor Cancer Survivor Day was held in conjunction with National Cancer Survivor Day, an annual, worldwide celebration throughout the country. Participants unite in a symbolic event to show the world there is life after a cancer diagnosis.

The event, which began over a decade ago with a gathering of about 50 people, grows bigger every year.

"This day gives cancer survivors and their families an opportunity to celebrate life. These people have a different perspective on life and a very positive spirit," said Brian Griffin, director of marketing and public relations at Delnor-Community Hospital.

"In difficult times, we enlarge our capacity to overcome situations and to grow," said Delnor Chief Operating Officer Tom Wright as he addressed attendees. "We celebrate the resiliency that is in this group."

Participants enjoyed an afternoon watching the Kane County Cougars take on the Fort Wayne Wizards. They shared stories of how surviving cancer changed their lives.

Geneva resident Shirley Anderson, who discovered she had breast cancer through a mammogram, also credits early detection with saving her life.

"In my generation, people were afraid to say the word cancer. Awareness is so important," she said.

Anderson has been cancer-free for six months.

"Cancer makes you realize that you don't have incredible amounts of time and to make the best of the time you have," said St. Charles resident Nick DiMonte of St. Charles, who is in remission from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

National Cancer Survivor's Day started 18 years ago by a couple wanting media coverage to demonstrate a cancer diagnosis was not an automatic death sentence. Since then, the idea has caught on in hundreds of communities across the country.

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