

Downingtown mom organizes benefit run

By Gazalla Gaya

When Downingtown resident, Hillary DeLone was diagnosed with breast cancer in January 2004, she could have surrendered to a multitude of negative emotions.

Instead, this brave 34-year-old Uchwan township resident set out to organize a run to benefit other women whom she felt had not been quite as blessed as she had been. "Whatever hand you are dealt in life, there is always some positive that comes out of it and it is always best to focus on the positive regardless of the situation," said DeLone.

The idea of organizing the 5 K run and walk were a direct result of these positive thoughts. The Mommy's Light 5 K run and 1 mile fun walk will be held this Saturday, April 30 from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Eagleview Corporate Center. All proceeds will benefit the Mommy's Life Lives On fund, a Delaware Valley non-profit organization that "brings joy and comfort to children and teens whose mothers are in life-threatening situations or are deceased by helping them keep alive traditions and simple pleasures they shared with their mothers."

DeLone was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer in January 2004 at the age of 33. She spent most of the past year undergoing three surgeries, eight rounds of chemotherapy, bilateral mastectomies and 5 1/2 weeks of radiation.

She finished undergoing treatment in September of 2004 and immediately focused on organizing the run. DeLone said that being

the race organizer made her feel that she was being proactive. DeLone is hoping to raise \$15,000 for Mommy's Light Lives On. She is expecting at least 400 runners to show up for the race.

DeLone credited her spouse, Michael, for being extremely supportive through her battle and for trying to maintain a normal life for their family. They have three young children, Lily 5, Zachary 4, and Natalie, 2.

She said that she was also lucky enough to have a strong network of friends who brought her family dinners at least three nights a week for most of the past year. "

"Helping others in this way has turned out to be one of the most fulfilling things I have ever done. It brings an amazing group of people together on a regular basis, and in a surprising way, it helps me feel like I am still doing something to fight my cancer." She added that she felt extremely blessed and wanted to help other families who were not as fortunate as she has been.

According to Mommy's Light Lives On, there are presently over 20,000 eligible children in the Delaware Valley.

According to a Harvard University study, bereaved children are at two to three times greater risk for psychological problems than non-bereaved children. Mothers are often the emotional caretakers and are better able to maintain predictability and routine that are so important to young people. A mother's death may be associated with more emotional and behavioral problems than the death of any other family member.

"Moms are often the key per-

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son of their family's traditions and rituals and when a mother dies, keeping alive those traditions is a way to help their children honor their past, celebrate their present and build their future," said Laura Munts of Mommy's Light Lives On. She added, "There are such few things that tether us to what is important that we must nurture them."

Mommy's Light Lives On was the brain child of Mary Murphy, a single mom, who was diagnosed with cancer in December 1996. Murphy talked with her then 10-year-old son to prepare him for life without

her. In October 1997, Murphy incorporated Mommy's Light Lives On Fund to help facilitate the process of continuing traditions for the children and their guardians. Murphy died 2 1/2 months later. After

Murphy's death, Mommy's Light continued to grow.

Policies for fulfilling requests and training volunteers were established with the generous help of the Make-A-Wish Foundation in Philadelphia. For more information, visit www.mommyslight.org.

Donations can be made online or to: Mommy's Light Lives On Fund

P.O. Box 494 Lionville, PA 19353.

The 5 K run on April 30, will also include a free concert for youngsters at 8:30 a.m. performed by Sally's Music Circle. Fox News Anchor Jenipher Frederick will join in the festivities which include a clown, prizes, t-shirts and refreshments. The race will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will culminate with a complimentary bacon and egg breakfast for participants, served by the Brickside Grille. Medals and prizes will be awarded for the top three male and female runners in each age category, and all Tot Trot participants will receive prizes. The entry fee is \$15 per individual for the 5 K Race, \$10 per individual for the 1 Mile Fun Walk and a suggested family donation of \$5 for the Tot Trot.

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