

Health Care

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Courage walks on: Hungry Hollow Hooters train for breast cancer walk

When a group of 12 local women gather this September to take part in the Weekend to End Breast Cancer walk throughout Toronto, they have one main focus.

One of their team members, Joanne Daquano, 38, is a cancer patient, and she has been fighting an ongoing battle with the disease since 1999.

In May of that year, Daquano discovered a lump in her left breast and eventually underwent a lumpectomy, and later a mastectomy before she was finished.

"The doctors discovered my cancer was estrogen receptor positive," said Daquano, "Meaning it feeds off the estrogen in my system. That was a good thing—it meant that hormone treatment was an effective treatment for it."

She underwent reconstructive surgery in 2000, and just naturally assumed it would be "smooth sailing from there on in."

"I joined in the dragon boat race to raise funds for cancer research," said Daquano, "And we called our team *Dragons Abreast*. It was great to take part, since I ran into numerous people who had similar problems as me, and it gave me lots of support."

The 'smooth sailing' was soon to become a bit rougher. "In December of 2002, I felt some pain in my chest area," said Daquano, "And I figured I had just strained myself or something."

But following a Computed Axial Tomography (CAT) scan, Daquano was told the cancer had spread to her breast bone.

"I had radiation treatments in 2003, and also hormonal treatments to rid my system of estrogen," said Daquano, "And after it was all finished, the doctors followed it up with another CAT scan."

By then, Daquano took immediate action if she felt any sort of discomfort. In February of this year, she had lower back pain, and after more tests, the doctors discovered two spots on her lower spine.

"I was put on a different medication," said Daquano, "And I'm now controlling it with more aggressive drugs."

Most recently, Daquano was informed

that her latest CAT scan showed more spots on her bones and some small ones on her liver. She is beginning chemotherapy treatment immediately, but is adamant she's taking part in the September walk.

"I have to carry on with the belief that it will stay in remission—that's how I cope with it," said Daquano, "But some days it's not easy."

As a Grade 7-8 teacher at St. Catherine of Alexandria School, Daquano has been on and off work for some time now, but still tries to keep involved.

"I have always been quite upfront with my students," said Daquano, "I believe in facing things instead of trying to deny them, and I think it has been good for all of us."

She has been the same with her three children, Dylan, 11, Dean, 9 and Darcy, 8, as they deal with the day-to-day challenges.

And Daquano is quick to praise her husband Mike.

"We were high school sweethearts," said Daquano, "We started going together in Grade 10—he's been the best husband I could ask for, so supportive and understanding."

Her mom Kay d'Entremont is another rock in her life, helping her with some of her household chores when she's tired, and 'just being there when I need her.' "I don't know what I'd do without her some days," said Daquano, "She's such a support for me."

Daquano's sister Jeannine d'Entremont-Farrar is also helping her cope.

"Joanne has been such an inspiration to our family and friends," said d'Entremont-Farrar, "Naturally, there are some days that she's down, but we have never seen her wallow in self-pity. She's been incredibly strong and positive throughout this ordeal, and her attitude has been so inspiring."

"I believe you can 'wallow' in it and feel sorry for yourself," said Daquano in response, "But if you do, you may as well say 'forget it'. I can't do that—I have too much to live for, and I'm responsible to too many people to simply say 'forget it'."

In addition to being a daily support



Sisters Jeannine d'Entremont-Farrar (left) and Joanne Daquano



The Hungry Hollow Hooters take a moment to gather for a photo as they meet twice weekly to train for the Weekend to End Breast Cancer walk throughout Toronto, September 10-12. Team members include, (front, from left) Ann Langley, Donna Simonsen, Janice Timmons. Standing, Joanne Daquano, Sheila Jobin, Denean Jones, Sharon Gresswell, Alana Savage, JoAnne Paty, Jeannine d'Entremont-Farrar, Jennifer Eckert and Joanne Whitton.

like her mother, d'Entremont-Farrar is also part of the team of walkers who will take part in September.

"We call the team *Hungry Hollow Hooters*," joked Daquano, "We called ourselves that because we train for the event by walking in Hungry Hollow, and there are lots of owls down there."

"The team captain is Jo Anne Paty," said Daquano, "She joined with her friend Sharon Gresswell, as they have walked their dogs together in Hungry Hollow for ages."

From there, the numbers grew from friends of friends, one is the mother of one of Daquano's former students, and all sorts of women from different walks have come together to make up the team of 12.

Team members range in ages from late 30s to early 40s, and train Thursdays and Sundays, walking in Hungry Hollow to build up their distance every week.

"We intend to walk from Acton to Georgetown by the end of summer," said Daquano, "One of the girls lives in Acton, so we're walking from her place to Georgetown."

In addition to training with the team, d'Entremont-Farrar is also working to raise sponsors and more money. "To date the

team has raised about \$10,000," she said. "Our goal is to reach \$25,000 by the time we take part in the walk in September."

The team is looking for donations of any size and their progress can be tracked by checking the Web site at www.endcancer.ca, and typing in *Hungry Hollow Hooters*. One can sponsor any member of the team over a secure connection on-line, at www.endcancer.ca, under *Hungry Hollow Hooters*.

Local business Barrager's Cleaners have jumped on the *Hooters'* bandwagon, pledging to donate two cents from the cleaning of each piece of clothing from May 1 to August 31, as well as \$10 from every wedding gown cleaned and heirloomed, and \$5 from every hockey bag that is cleaned.

The group will also be holding a barbecue August 21 at the Farmers' Market, at McMaster's Meats' downtown store. The group will use that as a 'meet and greet' event.

"Having cancer, even when it's in remission, can be a helpless feeling," said Daquano, "But by being active in events like this, I know I'm doing all I can do to fight it—and that gives me strength."


—By Ted Brown, staff writer

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