

# Laguna Beach Independent

"Our Town-Our Paper"

lbindy.com

September 23, 2011 | Volume X, Issue 38



Sol Roberts captains Latinas Race for the Cure, one of six Laguna Beach race teams among 750 from throughout the area participating in Sunday's Komen Race for the Cure in Newport Beach.

## Unbowed by Cancer, a Nurse Turns to Advocacy

By JENNIFER ERICKSON | LB INDY

"This can't be cancer, because I had a mammogram," Laguna Beach resident Sol Roberts recalled thinking when she found a lump in her breast in December 2006. Though the uncomfortable test intended to detect cancer found none just five months earlier, Roberts' self-examination saved her life.

After a lumpectomy, followed by chemotherapy and then radiation, Roberts, who retired as a registered nurse at the time of her diagnosis, is now a four-year breast cancer survivor determined to educate her peers, especially those who lack health insurance. More than 300 women in Orange County die of breast cancer each year. "You have to be diligent," she said. "The only thing you have is that early screening, which is not just a mammogram but especially self awareness."

That's the message she hopes to convey Sunday, Sept. 25, when she participates in the 20th annual Race for the Cure, beginning at Fashion Island. The local affiliate of Susan G. Koman Race for the Cure supports breast cancer awareness,

research and medical services for low-income women.

Roberts is captain of Latinas Race for the Cure #3221, one of six Laguna Beach race teams among 750 from throughout Southern California participating in the race.

The well-run, perennially successful event is a testament to grass-roots volunteers, over 1,500 strong, and participants like Roberts and another local resident, Christine Fugate.

Fugate, a mother, filmmaker and adjunct Chapman University film professor, discovered a lump in her breast just three weeks after a clean mammogram reading. Diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma in January, she is currently undergoing radiation treatment, which was preceded by surgery and six months of chemotherapy.

Fugate and her family will participate in the "Fun Mile" at Sunday's race with the Chemo Room Groupies team #1973, a group of recently treated patients, staff and friends.

"All of our volunteers and leaders on

*KOMEN, page 24*

# Komen

PAGE 1 | NEWS

the Race Committee are truly passionate about making the event a success and have embraced our mission to find a cure," said Komen OC's executive director and Laguna Beach resident Lisa Wolter, who is also a member of the Soroptimist International of Laguna Beach race team.

"They [Komen OC] have a vision, and the women and men volunteers are so committed that it's phenomenal," said Roberts, proud to join the organization's board.

Roberts has long been active in Latina issues as a leader of the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women and founding member of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses of Orange

County.

Her advocacy for Latinas and breast cancer awareness dovetailed in 2006 when she decided to organize a Komen team. Though breast cancer incidence among Latinas is lower than the national average, more Latina women die because they are generally diagnosed later, she said.

Three months after the September race Roberts felt the lump. The same friends who joined the race supported her through treatment and convalescence. "They were my strength," said Roberts, whose friends sustained the team without her in 2007.

Last year's team numbered 30. She's aiming for more this year and being a Latina isn't necessary. "We are very inclusive. We take anybody who wants to come," said Roberts. "Our philosophy

is walk and gossip."

Enthusiasm for the race seems contagious. Chris Loidolt, co-president of Hearts of Montage, the employee volunteer group at the resort, fields a team that draws volunteers from every department. Thanks to Komen OC educational material, several employees pursued testing and detected early breast cancer. "The organization is a life saver, and we're honored to participate in the Race for the Cure each September," said Loidolt.

The vivacious Roberts wears an infectious smile and displays an energy level that belies her 60 years. But she is vehement about delivering her message. "Women who don't have insurance or knowledge are extremely disadvantaged," she said, adding that more than 90 percent of women without insurance

will die if they develop breast cancer.

Women should immediately pursue any abnormalities with their doctor, said Roberts.

Komen OC's \$3.1 million fundraising goal is achieved by calling on each participant to raise at least \$125, the average cost of a life-saving mammogram. While 25 percent of proceeds go toward research, 75 percent returns to local programs. Last year, Komen OC distributed \$1.3 million to local agencies and programs, Roberts said.

"It's a beautiful experience," Roberts said of the race. "The whole place is filled with pink. There are thousands of women. It's phenomenal."

More race info: visit <http://www.komenoc.org/race>, or call 714-957-9157. Walk-in participants are welcome.