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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER Online extras, including a new gallery of jobs cartoons, at ocregister.com/opinion

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CHARITY

How they joined the Race

Editor's note: Orange County residents have opened their hearts for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure for 19 races, raising more than \$30 million for breast cancer research and services. More than 30,000 runners and others are expected at the 2011 race, Sept. 25 at Fashion Island in Newport Beach. The Register is a founding sponsor and will field a race team as well as produce a special section, from which a portion of the advertising proceeds will be donated to The Komen Foundation. On July 14 the Register hosted a race kickoff to recognize this year's local sponsors. The following essays are ex-

cerpted from speeches given that day. Registration for the Race for the Cure is at komenoc.org.

KATHY VOORHIS

Irvine, works full-time for a doctor and serves on the Komen Orange County Race for the Cure survivor tribute committee.



being misdiagnosed three times, I began my personal

My story of survivorship is kind of like a roller coaster, with lots of ups and downs along the way. In the spring of 1999, after



REGISTER FILE PHOTO

journey with breast cancer...definitely not a journey I had expected to be embarking upon.

Chemotherapy, surgeries and more doctor appoint-

ments than I could ever have imagined were followed by two recurrences of the disease. At this time, I am at stage IV metastatic bone cancer - meaning that my original diagnosis of breast cancer has spread to all of my bones, from the top of my head to the tips of

my toes.

Last year, my summer began with respiratory distress and pneumonia, ending with

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RACE: A woman dies from breast cancer every 75 seconds

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major blood clots in both legs. Because of this, I was able to meet many of Orange County's hardworking paramedics. For a single gal this may sound great, but trust me, being transported in an ambulance is not a great place to meet a handsome, single fireman!

Along this journey, I feel honored to have begun what I consider a very privileged partnership with Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Because of the accomplishments attributed to Komen, I represent one of 2.6 million breast cancer survivors living in the United States today, a number verified by the Center for Disease Control.

As a member of the expansive volunteer network with the Orange County Affiliate, I have the wonderful job of working with two other incredible ladies to organize the tribute at the annual Race for the Cure for approximately 2,000 breast cancer survivors. During the tribute, we honor the lives of women that we have lost, celebrate those who have overcome the disease and support others who are currently fighting their battles with breast cancer.

Survivors now have a new attitude...living life with a chronic disease, not a death threat. Along with all of the survivors that I have met, we face the challenge, bounce back and move forward as we overcome obstacles in our way.

With your support, our possibilities for survivorship are endless. Enlightening women about breast cancer, early detection, mammograms and research for new drug therapy are all positive steps that have been taken in the right direction. We can have hope for a brighter tomorrow after being newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

Do you ever stop and wonder if you have a predestined purpose? Well, believe me, I have found mine. Being a patient advocate for all women became my goal. I tell my story not as a fear tactic, but to educate all the women I know and women I will come in contact with. My hope is to give them strength and courage to meet the days ahead and now, most importantly, the years ahead.

Thank you to everyone who has helped support breast health and Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Thank you for what you have done for us, the survivors - giving us time to accomplish our dreams, to enjoy our lives and for me, to enjoy my six wonderful grandchildren.

CHRIS TANNOUS

Fountain Valley, immediate past president and current board member for the Komen Orange County Affiliate

I have been a breast health advocate for 13 years. The Orange County Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure is 20 years old and Susan G. Komen for the Cure has been around for 30 years. President Nixon declared war on breast cancer

40 years ago and the American Association of Cancer Researchers has been around for more than 100 years. I don't know about you, but I am getting a little impatient, and so is Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Though we've made great strides in the war on breast cancer, we realize there is still much work to be done both here in Orange County and around the world. The facts are staggering:

- Globally, a case of breast cancer is diagnosed every 29 seconds, and a woman dies from breast cancer every 75 seconds.
- In the U.S., a case of breast cancer is diagnosed every 2 minutes. A woman dies from breast cancer every 13 minutes.



Tannous

- Over the next 25 years, another 25 million women and men are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer, and another 10 million people will die of breast cancer.

This is simply unacceptable, which is why it is so important for the community to partner

with us to fight this battle. We must continue to invest in high quality research if we are going to put an end to this deadly disease.

Komen, along with many other funders, has been part of significant milestones over the past 30 years that have led to the real possibility of personalized medicine and a 31 percent decline in mortality in the U.S. since 1990. We are seeing breast cancer survivors living longer, and even those with an advanced Stage IV diagnosis are living well beyond that five-year milestone, turning cancer into a chronic disease.

Komen's research investment is a key element in raising funds for advancements in breast health. A significant portion of that investment has come back to California, with the state receiving 249 grants since 1984, totaling more than \$52 million. Some of that money has come back to the UC Irvine.

We have gone from a major focus on basic biology to focusing on making an impact on people - developing new treatments, more effective early detection methods and strategies for reducing risk and ultimately preventing breast cancer. However, our work - yours and mine - is still not done.

AMBROCIA LOPEZ

Santa Ana, is the community outreach and education specialist for the Orange County Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure

As the community outreach and education specialist at the Orange County Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, my role is to help create culturally appropriate strategies to find, educate, motivate and link high-risk Hispanic women in my community to appropriate resources to reduce late stage diagnosis and death

from breast cancer.

In Orange County, Anaheim and Santa Ana are the cities that have the highest concentration of Hispanic women with the highest rate of late-stage diagnosis. I was born and raised in Santa Ana, which has allowed me to understand the needs of my community and some of the cultural barriers that prevent women from getting routine mammograms. Many families still hold very Mexican traditions and beliefs. It is because of these women that I hold such a passion for my work, seeking out women like my mother, who is currently uninsured, does not speak English well and always puts her family first before her own health.

I was shocked to realize how disproportionate the statistics are for Hispanic women. Twenty-six percent of Hispanic women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer at later stages than non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics of Mexican descent are 61 percent more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage and are at a 34 percent increased risk of mortality in comparison to non-Hispanic white women.

At Komen, we are committed to saving the lives of Hispanic women in Orange County. We have invested time and money to understand this community and learn how to make an impact in their breast health.

Through a series of focus groups with low-income Mexican American women under the guidance of Unidos Contra el

Cancer de Seno Coalition, we identified the church as an effective setting to reach, educate and link women to screening. Religion and faith play an integral role in a Latina's life, belief system and health practices and the church is known as a trusted source within the

community. We have held five healing masses and succeeded in reaching more than 1,600 women and linking approximately 80 to screening mammograms.

Another culturally appropriate and successful strategy in reaching high-risk Hispanic women has been working with ethnic supermarkets like Northgate Gonzalez Supermarkets. Every weekend in May and October, we have outreach events at local stores in Santa Ana and Anaheim to provide educational materials at our information table and collect names of women who need a mammogram. Last year we decided to have an onsite mammography event at one of the Northgate markets and succeeded in providing 24 clinical breast exams and 18 screening mammograms.

Critical services like mammograms for early detection are essential to the well-being of women in need. I hope that women like my mother will be able to receive routine mammography screenings as we work to reduce some of the barriers that

impede Hispanic women from having access to life-saving early detection tools.

BAYONNE GRESHAM

Rancho Cucamonga, is the assistant manager at a Gap outlet and volunteer with the Komen Orange County Affiliate.

"It can never happen to me." This was a singular feeling I had about breast cancer, because as an African American woman it was a disease I rarely heard anyone talk about in my community. That sentiment changed in 2005, when I visited my college roommate and had the honor of meeting her mother, Diedrie Brewton, a breast cancer survivor and an African American woman.

Until then, the notion of possibly having breast cancer had never crossed my mind, but here in front of me was a woman who proudly talked about overcoming the very thing one rarely hears about growing up in an African American community. In conversation with Diedrie, she never said having the disease brought her down; instead, she said it made her a stronger woman. Instantly, I knew it was time for me to put ignorance aside and become familiar with breast health.

Through corporate volunteer work with Gap Inc., I felt encouraged to put the stigma of breast cancer aside and become involved with the Orange County Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Last year, Komen Orange County joined forces with the neighboring Los Angeles County Affiliate to address the breast health needs in my community. The shocking reality of breast cancer statistics for African American women made me realize even further how important it is to build local women's awareness of breast health and local resources.

- African American women in Los Angeles and Orange County are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer at a later stage and are at significantly increased risk of dying from the disease than Caucasian women.
- In comparison, an individual who is diagnosed early has a 98 percent survival rate, while those detected at an advanced stage have a 20 percent survival rate.

To combat these alarming statistics, the two Affiliates partnered for the first time in an effort to address the issue of breast health in Long Beach, a common area where women seek services across both county lines. The Affiliates created a network of diverse leaders and organizations called the Komen African American Community Partnership to engage the local community in the breast cancer movement. Thanks to funds raised from the 2010 Race for the Cure, the Affiliates and the Partnership will aim to decrease breast cancer mortality among African American women through a number of initiatives.



Gresham



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