

Cancer survivor now runs for cure

By Bill Shaw

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Beth Johnson, 47, of Lake Jackson is a breast cancer survivor and represents the crusade of those who have beaten cancer to help prevent it, to encourage others who are afflicted with it and to celebrate the special brotherhood and sisterhood of those who raise money for the fight against cancer.

“I believe it’s one way of giving to those who have experienced cancer in their lives,” Johnson said. “It’s just so devastating.”

“I entered the Komen Race for the Cure for breast cancer for the first time in 2000, the first year after my breast cancer surgery and while I was undergoing chemotherapy,” Johnson said. “My husband, Dave, pushed me in a wheelchair during the 5K run/walk. I have participated every year since, eight races in all.”

Johnson later joined the Team in Training for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

“I participated in the Women’s Nike Marathon in San Francisco in 2006,” Johnson said. “I ran the half-marathon (13.1 miles) and raised \$3,900 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. I ran this in part to honor Bob and Dorothy Savana, who held weekly prayer meetings and prayed for me during my illness. Bob was later diagnosed with

multiple myeloma. My brother, Lucian, had non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma at age 18. He is now 45.”

“I tried hard to support Beth through her fight with cancer,” Dave Johnson said. “I watched my mom die from the disease and learned that family and emotional support is just as important as the medical treatment.”

The running bug bit Dave when he drove Beth to Team in Training sessions in Houston’s Memorial Park every Saturday at 5:30 a.m.

“I had never run before, except a mile or so around the block,” Dave said. “You quickly get caught up in the enthusiasm — it’s contagious. The folks we met were really amazing. Cancer had touched them all in one way or another, and they quickly bonded with each other. Most everyone was a novice, so the coaches taught us how to train safely, and mentors helped us with fundraising.”

Beth is currently training for the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer on April 12-13, a 39-mile walk over two days.

“I am walking in honor of my Grandma Talley, who died of breast cancer, as well as my sister Mary and myself, who are both breast cancer survivors,” she said. “Every step I take will be in honor of my daddy and oldest brother, who both died of lung cancer.”

“When Beth said she wanted to train for a half-marathon with Team and Training and raise almost \$4,000 along the way, I thought she was a little

crazy and thought the idea might soon fade away,” Dave said. “It didn’t fade away at all. It got bigger. She was really dedicated to the training and the fundraising.”

“My greatest emotional experience is knowing that I could run the race of my life fighting breast cancer and coming out the other side,” Beth said. “I could help others through fundraising for the medically underserved, research, education, and support of patients and their families.”

“It’s hard for me to tell you whether I am more proud of her running or her fundraising,” Dave said. “She works equally hard at both. She has truly taken a lemon and made lemonade out of it.”

Join the fight against cancer in West Columbia this Saturday in the third annual Race for the Cure. Teresa Holland, another cancer survivor, organized the race, and the proceeds go to the American Cancer Society. Register online at www.active.com or call Holland at (979) 491-2181 for a registration form. Packet pickup and race-day registration begin at 7 a.m. near 13th and Jefferson streets, and the race starts at 8 a.m.

For information on contributing to Beth’s efforts, call (979) 297-4633 or send an e-mail to [aggies81\(at\)swbell.net](mailto:aggies81(at)swbell.net).

Bill Shaw’s running column appears in *The Facts* every other Monday.