

Brain tumor awareness walk is today

Post-walk activities feature food, music

BY ROBIN BROWN • THE NEWS JOURNAL • MAY 3, 2008

After Chris Grundner of Wilmington lost his wife in 2004, he traded his job as a marketing executive to work full time promoting awareness of brain tumors, the illness that killed her.

Today, the Kelly Heinz-Grundner Foundation he established is holding its first GetYourHeadInTheGame® Awareness Walk at Dravo Plaza on the Wilmington Riverfront.

"It is the first-ever brain tumor awareness walk in the state of Delaware," Grundner said. "As a result, I am proud to say that we have over 1,400 registered walkers."

About 190,000 Americans are diagnosed yearly with brain tumors, News Journal archives say, and most aggressive types give patients a 4 percent chance of survival five years after diagnosis. Grundner's wife died two years after diagnosis.

Last-minute walkers are welcome today, he said, adding participants can walk any part, or all, of the two-mile course.

Registration starts at 2 p.m., the walk at 3 p.m. The Inspiration Wall, at the start/finish line, will post walkers' tributes to loved ones.

There is no minimum pledge or donation required, said Diane Freed, assistant director of the foundation and event coordinator.

"It's a free walk," she said. "Everyone is welcome."

Post-walk activities run to 6 p.m. The event, presented by the Helen F. Graham Cancer Center of Christiana Care, also features free food, live music by The Phobiacs, activities, contests and prizes including top donor team.

Because brain tumors are the second leading cancer-related cause of death of those under 20, Grundner said today's walk is designed to support families with affected children.

"We have all sorts of activities for kids, things like face-painting, a balloon artist, personal ponies and cotton candy," he said, and many people are walking for children.

"For example, Team Kara, which is dedicated to Kara Kelly, a 5-year-old girl that is battling a brain tumor, is our biggest family team with over 400 walkers," Grundner said.

The biggest business team, with more than 200 walkers,



After his wife, Kelly, died of a brain tumor, Chris Grundner decided to work full time to promote awareness of the disease.

is Team Chez Nicole from a salon on Union Street in Wilmington. Its walk, Grundner said, "is dedicated to two sisters from Chez Nicole, Nicole Testa and Cynthia Herrick, who are both battling a brain tumor, which is a very, very rare occurrence."

The group shares more survivor stories and information at <http://www.getyourheadinthegame.org>, with more on the walk at <http://www.getyourheadinthegame.org/walk/index.php>.

The group also is reaching out via YouTube. "We recently launched the first-ever brain tumor awareness commercial based on our 'Did You Know?' Awareness Campaign," Grundner said. "You can see it at <http://www.youtube.com/khgfoundation>."

The nonprofit group, working with the Delaware Community Foundation, recently began a pilot project to give financial aid to brain tumor patients and their families. And an awareness campaign is being planned for New Castle County this fall.

The Kelly Heinz-Grundner Foundation will hold its annual Tulips Against Tumors Tribute this summer to raise money through flower sales.

Tax-deductible donations may be made online or sent to Kelly Heinz-Grundner Brain Tumor Foundation, 300 Water St., Suite 103, Wilmington, DE 19801.