

Battling cancer one stroke at a time

By David J. Criblez
dcriblez@oysterbayguardian.com

Nearly 200 swimmers dove into Long Island Sound and swam to Morgan Park Beach in Glen Cove to battle cancer at the 11th annual Swim Across America "Sound to the Cove" Swim fundraiser on August 13th.

The swim was set all various levels from the 1/2 mile swim to the 1 mile swim to the 5K swim to the 10K swim from Larchmont across Long Island Sound. Swimmers were guided and watched over by over 60 kayakers, harbor patrols boats and lifeguards in the water throughout the swim.

The funds raised at the event went to benefit the Miracle Foundation Pavilion at Mercy Medical Center, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, the Children's Hospital at Montefiore, Fighting Chance in Sag Harbor and the Feinstein Institute at North Shore-LIJ.

"This whole event is focused on volunteers getting together to raise funds to kill cancer and we think we can," said Gerry Oakes, Vice President and Director of Swim Across America and Chair of the SAA-Nassau/Suffolk Committee.

Oakes, who lost both his parents to cancer, works with Pam Danbusky to put together the "Sound to the Cove" Swim. Over the past 10 years, the event has raised over \$4 million and they hoped significantly increase that number this year.

TEAM HOPE

Mike Ford of Port Washington heads up "Team Hope," which featured 58 people and has been in existence for the past eight years. They collectively



Team Stacey: (from left) Jessica Foschi, Pamela Danbusky – Executive Committee, Stacey's brother Tony Leondis, Stacey's mom Ellen Leondis and Michelle Rea.



Team Hope: (From left, back row) Al DePhillips, Mike Ford and Keira Ford. (From left, front row) A.J. and Michaela DePhillips.

raised over a 1/2 million dollars in the last 7 years and were confident they'd take in \$75,000 for this year alone.

"On Team Hope we are a family and this swim is a family effort," said Ford, who gets help from his daughter Keira. He used to just be a swimmer but once all three of his good friends got struck with cancer he felt he needed to do more so he started Team Hope. "There's something special about going out into the water and swimming all together," said Keira.

TEAM STACEY

Ellen Leondis of Garden City led her very personal group called "Team Stacey" named after her daughter who died three years ago from osteosarcoma that developed into leukemia.

"Stacey was truly an amazing person," said Ellen fighting back tears. "She was heading to medical school. She was a real go-getter who loved people. People were just drawn to her. She was magnetic."

As a tribute to Stacey, the team of 47 people strong raised over \$70,000. "It's

wonderful because it's for Stacey and we all honor her memory but it very difficult because she's not with us," said Ellen. "She wanted to do a lot of work for cancer research. In fact she started her own foundation when she was first diagnosed. Now we do it for her."

TEAM FEINSTEIN

Graduates from the old Chaminade swim team were called in by their old coach Angelo Pellicone to join Team Feinstein at the "Sound to the Cove" Swim. The 25 members were on the



Event Chair Gerry Oakes (left) shakes hands with Bob Foschi of Glen Head (right) as they exit the water.



Cousins Caroline O'Connor, 13, Manhasset and Carlin Sheridan, 15, New York City slap each other a hi-five.

lookout for any dolphins that were recently sighted in local waters.

Liam Carey, 22, of Long Beach, said, "One of my friend's mom got diagnosed with cancer. We got all the Chaminade guys together to rally for the cause," he said. "It was a fun time."

Joining Carey were fellow Chaminade grads Robert Frawley, 23, of Syosset, Mike Pepi, 25, of Huntington and his brother Kevin Carey, 24, of Long Beach.

FAMILY REUNION

For Charlie Murphy, 56,

of Bernardville, New Jersey the "Sound to the Cove" Swim is a family reunion. For the last seven years his family members and network of friends from Garden City have participated in the event.

Swimming in honor of his late mother Eileen, Murphy enjoyed the water conditions and the camaraderie. "This is as good as it gets – the water was flat, warm and best of all - no jellyfish," he said with a wide grin. "Plus I'm with all my people. It's like coming home."