

Pink in the Park kicks off Breast Cancer Awareness Month

By Charlotte Cloyd

The sun shone down on the ring of white tents and pink tables arranged in Center City Park in downtown Greensboro for the fifth annual Pink in the Park event hosted by the Breast Center of Greensboro Imaging.

A joyous and celebratory atmosphere united the pink-clad attendants of the event as they walked among the pink tables picking up educational pamphlets about mammography screenings and yearly breast exams.

"Pink in the Park is the free educational kick-off event for October, (which is) Breast Cancer Awareness Month in the Triad," said Mary Jean Nelson, service coordinator for the Breast Center of Greensboro Imaging. "Our purpose is to have educational resources and information available to anyone who has ever had cancer affect their lives."

Many women sporting "Survivor" and "Save the Ta-Tas" t-shirts marched proudly in the park.

"I come every year," said 10-year breast cancer survivor Marlene Ray.

The resources abounded, ranging from the Women's Resource Center of Greensboro passing out information about self-esteem workshops to the local Panera Bread passing out bagel samples and statistics about breast cancer survival and prevention techniques.

Also present at the event were representatives from the Women's Hospital Mammography Services, who offer a mammography scholarship for women in need, and Sisters Network of Greensboro, a national African American breast cancer survivors organization, as well as local boutiques that provide merchandise for women post-cancer.

The overwhelming attitude of the vendors present was to raise awareness about preventative measures for breast

cancer in addition to supporting men, women, and families directly affected by the disease.

"If you have breast tissue, you're at risk," said Nora Jones, the affiliate chapter president of Sisters Network of Greensboro.

Also at the event, a large, bright pink ambulance was surrounded by people writing messages in Sharpie all over; Cone Health turned one of their emergency support vehicles into a giant pink breast cancer ribbon.

"It's a support vehicle, for those friends and families of people who haven't

advertise events that raise money to donate to breast cancer research. For example, Panera Bread has partnered with Friends for an Earlier Breast Cancer Test.

"A portion of every pink ribbon bagel that we sell goes to them for a research grant," said Ashley Ketner, the local marketing manager for Panera Bread.

Given the impact of breast cancer, raising money for research is important. During 2011, 230,480 new cases of breast cancer in the United States are estimated to occur, according to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure website. 39,520 deaths due to breast cancer will occur.

Pink in the Park was a resounding success, according to Nelson. Her goal when planning the event included not only ensuring that vendors from the community come out in support of Breast Cancer awareness, but also that attendees experience a certain atmosphere and energy that exudes celebration and joy.

"We wanted our community to enter the park feeling welcomed," said Nelson. "The pink and white set the tone for a calm but fun atmosphere for folks from all over the Triad."

Nelson spoke about the importance of raising awareness.

"I think just having educational material out throughout the community to encourage women to do their self breast exam every month, to visit their health provider

every year, and to have a screening mammogram as often as recommended by the American Cancer society starting at age 40 every year or two and after 50 every year is important," said Nelson.

Self-education does not suffice, however. Ray wants to spread the word to others.

Ray said, "I encourage people to be active in their local community in supporting the cause of breast cancer awareness."

1 in 8 women
in the U.S. will develop
invasive breast cancer in
her lifetime.

450 men
will die from
breast cancer
in 2011.

In 2007
40,598
women in
the U.S. died of
breast cancer.

Source: www.cancer.org

survived breast cancer," said Thomas Tucker, the lead communications specialist at Cone Health's CareLink. "It's a symbol of support."

Tucker created the idea of turning an emergency vehicle into the "PinkLink" for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The truck will remain pink through the holidays, and at the end of the year, sections of the vehicle will be saved.

In addition to the desire to spread awareness, there was also the desire to



Illustration by Joy Damon