

Relay for Life: a night lit bright with so much hope

By Kim Kleimeier
STAFF WRITER

"My dad was diagnosed with non-treatable cancer when I was two months old," said Patrick Ledford, first-year and emcee for the Relay for Life event on Fri., April 13.

Ledford's story is just one of many that could be found at the Guilford football field, where the event took place. Young and old came out to support current cancer patients, caretakers and cancer survivors.

This event has become more than just a fundraiser for many of these people. "It's become a family tradition," said Ledford about his connection to Relay.

Relay for Life is an event established by the American Cancer Society that raises money to help combat cancer. Communities all across the nation host this event in the hopes of one day finding a cure and saving the lives of thousands.

ACS approached the Guilford softball team about hosting the event. Hooked on the idea of hosting a Relay event at Guilford, softball co-captains and seniors Morgan Andrews and Kim Keys jumped into action.

"When I look at what this event is for, I look at the bigger picture," said Keys. "Take away my car, take away my materialistic things because they are nothing compared to the individuals who are fighting and those who have

survived (cancer)."

The fundraising goal for the softball team is \$15,000 and the online total is already at \$6,000, which does not include the amount of money raised at the actual event. At the end of the night, another \$700 was added to the overall total, and it does not stop there since the donation period is not over until August.

Donations were given by signing up online or by going to the event and participating in the various activities such as corn hole and crazy tennis. Donations and concessions profits went straight to the overall total.

There was definitely a great sense of community on the football field as an array of people walked, made chalk drawings expressing hope and painted paper bags to support loved ones battling with cancer.

"It was a great atmosphere and I had a great time walking and playing the different games," said first-year Collin Rapp. "It's always nice when you can combine having fun with a good cause."

This event means something different for everyone, whether they're actively fighting cancer or simply coming out the support this cause.

"Relay, to me, is doing my part to help cancer research any way I can," said Rapp. "Though I don't know anyone directly that has been affected by cancer, I know it's a widespread problem so Relay is a way for me to help out."

Some of the messages read "to celebrate more

birthdays," "soon to be cancer-free" or simply someone's name.

The mood transitioned from lively and festive to much more somber and serious when it was time for the luminaria ceremony. As the crowd gathered in a circle, glow sticks in hand, everyone listened intently for the moment to make their glow sticks shine. Each crack of a glow stick represented a person who has or had cancer.

From children, to parents, to sisters and brothers, to neighbors and friends to relatives, everyone was thought of in that moment. More glow sticks crackled into illumination as each type of participant was called out.

While the entire crowd walked a silent lap, the lit bags spelled out the most essential word of all: hope.



A day and night worth remembering with hopes of becoming a tradition here at Guilford College.

(Left) Walkers for Relay for Life complete a "survivor lap" around the football field Friday evening on April 13, 2012. The event was coordinated and promoted by senior Morgan Andrews, with help from several student volunteers.

(Immediate Right) Luminaries covered with inspirational phrases line the edge of the football field. Each one held a name of a loved who suffered from cancer.

(Above Right) Students holding glowsticks attend a vigil at Relay for Life; each glowstick was lit in honor of a loved one who suffers or suffered from cancer.



PHOTOS BY KACEY MINNICK/GUILFORDIAN

Trans*Action: transformative stories from transitioning students

By Justyn Melrose
STAFF WRITER

Accompanied by the sound of coffee grinding, softly spoken conversation and the ever-present smell of Greenleaf coffee, a handful of Guilford students watched as a group of transgender college students' lives unfolded on screen.

On April 9 and 11, newly formed Guilford group Trans*Action brought a glimpse of the world of trans issues to the Greenleaf in a screening of the television series "TransGeneration." The series follows four transgender college students, bringing to light the difficulties they face in terms of their gender and sexual identities.

The screening was only the first event planned by the blossoming group Trans*Action. This group has begun work to offer education on trans-related issues and provide community for students who fall under the trans umbrella, including transgender, transsexual, gender, queer and gender non-conforming students.

"Ultimately (this kind of work helps to) create a safer space for all people, cisgender (and) trans-identified," said junior John St. Louis, co-founder of Trans*Action. "There's a space for challenging and exploring and

pushing around the range of gender, and also knowing that we all matter and knowing that we all are worthy of space and dignity, our right to pee and be safe and feel safe in our own skin."

Trans*Action showed "TransGeneration" in part to bring up problems involved with prescribed hormones and sexual reassignment surgery.

"(The) assumptions about surgery and (the) assumptions of what being trans is like, I think, need to be challenged and need to be questioned," said St. Louis.

St. Louis added that Trans*Action organized this screening in hopes of offering education to students and that it is "important ... to see and share trans experience."

In the series, the stories of male-to-female trans college students Raci Ignacio and Gabbie Gibson are very different, despite a potentially similar gender identity. While Raci struggles to afford legal hormones, Gabbie awaits her very expensive gender reassignment surgery, paid for by her family.

These are just two of the four trans students the series features and just one of many issues they face being trans.

Though initially attending for reasons like "my bike is here" or "the only other thing I'd do while doing

my homework is watch 'How I Met Your Mother,'" the students watching offered lively contributions to a discussion after the screening and found a lot of worth in the showing.

"I think it's interesting how different even the families that are quote-unquote accepting are," said senior Richard Johnson. "Raci's family is very supportive, but they all use 'he' and male pronouns, despite helping her find hormones ... That's supporting, but is that acceptance necessarily?"

"It's so hard for me to find the things that I want to be that I feel like reflect who I am," said senior Susan Robare. "I can't imagine my own self not reflecting (who I am)."

Next year, John St. Louis and Trans*Action hope to hold more events to continue the conversation and get more students interested, informed and involved.

"I hope that there (are) more trans-identifying students or people who are trans-identified that I haven't met yet on campus that can get in touch with us," St. Louis said. "But I'm excited. I'm glad that there's a trans-specific (group) on campus."

For more information on Trans*Action, contact John St. Louis at stlouisjt@guilford.edu.