

Thousands Walk for Cure Mall to Mall March Raises \$275,000 for Cancer Research Louis Cooper • lcooper@pnj.com • October 26, 2008

Pink T-shirts. Pink sweat suits. Pink baseball caps and boas. A dog in a pink jacket and pink leg warmers.

That sea of pink wove through the streets of Pensacola from University Mall to Cordova Mall on Saturday morning for the sixth annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Mall to Mall event.

The event, which saw more than 5,200 participants walk from University Mall to Cordova Mall, generated more than \$275,000, exceeding both the event's \$255,000 goal and last year's \$215,000, said Rosina Papantonio, marketing chairwoman for the event.

"All the money that is raised here goes to breast cancer research, education, advocacy and service," said Lori Perkins, a Making Strides Against Breast Cancer staff partner for the American Cancer Society.

"We have a local gift closet here that provides wigs, prostheses, scarves. We provide transportation to cancer treatment."

Community sponsorship

Mark Faulkner, Baptist Hospital administrator, greeted walkers before the event kicked off. Baptist Healthcare is the march's headline sponsor. Faulkner donned a pink T-shirt in memory of Baptist employee Jessica Martineau, who died March 25 of breast cancer at 37.

Faulkner said Baptist Healthcare, in conjunction with Cox Communications, has provided 137 mammograms to women of limited resources — including five women for whom breast cancer was detected.

"I'm sure everyone here this morning has a personal story just like I do," he said. "Our mission is to improve the quality of life of the people of the community we serve. ... There are continued advancements in treatment and detection of breast cancer. However, the best predictor of a good outcome is early detection, through mammograms, primarily."

One of those personally touched by breast cancer was Briann Wright, 27. She walked with a group from the Pensacola Power women's professional football

team. She brought her 5-year-old miniature pinscher, Leila, which she dressed in a pink jacket and leg warmers.

"My mother passed away with breast cancer when I was 7," Wright said. "She passed at the age of 36. She probably had cancer for over six years. She got tired of the chemo and things like that. She decided to stop doing chemo and to get her hair back. That's when the cancer started spreading to the rest of her body."

UWF shows its support

About 300 breast cancer survivors were among the marchers — including University of West Florida volleyball coach Melissa Wolter. She brought the entire team, along with family and friends. The group totaled about 30 people who raised about \$2,500.

"I was diagnosed two years ago. I had to go through two different lumpectomies, and then eight chemo treatments and then radiation for about a month. Now, I'm fine," Wolter, 33, said, adding she cannot be given the final OK for several more years. "This is the first time I've been out to this event. It's great to see a community get behind a cause like this. It's very touching."