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The Post-Standard

Concert raises cash to aid cancer fight

Fifteen bands perform as a memorial to cancer victim Lori Sullivan, 24.

October 14, 2002

By Pam Greene
Staff writer

On April 10, Lori Sullivan had been living in an adjustable Hospice bed in her parents' living room in Pennellville for a month.

Sullivan, 24, a Liverpool High School graduate, had recovered from a brain tumor, but the tumor on her neck was the size of an orange. She wanted to die at home.

Her boyfriend, Phil Arcuri, 26, lived on the couch next to her bed, fetching her painkillers and adjusting her head so that she didn't put too much pressure on the tumor and cause it to bleed. When it did, he'd help her parents clean the sheets.

At 7 a.m. that day, Sullivan asked her boyfriend for painkillers. He handed her a bottle, but instead of pills, Sullivan found a plastic egg. Inside was a diamond engagement ring.

"I don't even remember what I said. She started crying and I gave her a hug," Arcuri said. "I knew there was a good chance she wouldn't make it, but I just hoped."

She accepted the ring. Thirty-eight days later - before she could walk down the aisle - Sullivan died.

Hence the name of the 12-hour memorial concert held for her Sunday: Cancer Sucks.

Sullivan picked the name of the concert before she died.

"What else would she name it?" asked her father, Patrick Sullivan. There's no place for sappiness at a benefit like this, he said. Lori wasn't that type of person.

Last year, friends and family threw her a Cancer Sucks concert and raised \$6,000 to offset medical bills. This year, the money raised at the Bridge Street Music Hall at Ironix will go toward the Center for Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders at University Hospital. The concert began at 2 p.m. Sunday.

Fifteen bands, mostly alternative and heavy metal groups, donated their time, and the music hall was donated. By 7 p.m., 120 people had arrived. Each was charged \$5 at the door. The final attendance and money raised won't be available until today.

If anybody knew how horrible cancer is, it was Lori Sullivan. She found out she had synovial sarcoma, a rare cancer of the soft tissue, when she was 15. Yet she continued playing field hockey and lacrosse, in between 20 surgeries to remove malignancies around her body.

She graduated from Liverpool High School and went to Sacred Heart University for a year and played field hockey. She returned home to be an assistant lacrosse coach at Liverpool High School and attend the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, where she met Arcuri.

Meanwhile, the pretty young woman with big dimples and a sarcastic sense of humor also battled brain tumors, neck tumors, leg tumors and more lung tumors than doctors could chase. Her father lost track after the 15th, he said.

Between treatments, she camped, exercised and climbed mountains. She died before she could graduate.

The benefit was a celebration of her life. "It's nice not to have a funeral or wedding to get people together," said Tim Sullivan, 28, Lori's brother.

Attendees ranged from conservatively dressed middle-aged couples to men with five-inch purple spikes in their hair to match the metal spikes in their leather jackets. In between were many of Sullivan's closest friends from SUNY-ESF.

"I've never seen anyone go through so much and be so happy," said Jaime Newell, Sullivan's college friend. "I'm just here to help raise money."

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