

# *Record year for Relay*



Charles W. Johnson photo

A crowd estimated by Relay logistics coordinator Emily Panter to be around 2,000 took part in the seventh annual Warren County Relay for Life stretching from Friday night into Saturday morning.

This year's event raised a record high \$149,000. For more Relay coverage, see page 1-C.

# Lifestyles

# RELAY FOR LIFE 2009



Charles W. Johnson photos

The track at Nunley Stadium took on a purple tint as local cancer survivors walked the opening lap of the 2009 Relay for Life. Sponsored by Homeland Community Bank, the walk gives friends

and family a chance to observe and honor those who have challenged and defeated this devastating disease. Relay for Life is one of the premier fund-raisers for the American Cancer Society.



Cancer survivor Natasha Burks, who was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma in 2006, has been cancer free for almost two years. Burks stands in front of the HOPE sign with her 7-week-old son Memphis. "He is our hope for a survivor," she says.

## Event sets local record, raises \$149,000 for cancer research

By CHARLES W. JOHNSON  
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(McMinnville, Tenn.)

Warren County ignored hard times and once again dug deep in their pockets to raise money at the 2009 Relay for Life to support vital cancer research. The goal for this year's Relay was \$140,700 and, according to Relay co-chairman Dwight Burch, as of yesterday the total funds raised this year came to \$149,000, a record for Warren County.

"We were all very, very happy," Burch said Saturday morning. "It's all due to the teams and the community. Everyone stepped up during hard economic times and gave to a great cause."

During the event Friday Relay volunteer Emily Panter, who handled logistics, said those involved with Relay are pleased with this year's event, the seventh for McMinnville and Warren County.

"It's going great," Panter said. "Everything's gone real well this year. The weather's been good to us. I think we've had around 2,000 here tonight. We've got 35 teams that have tents set up, and the community has really come out to support us."

Cindy Rogers, of Homeland Community Bank which sponsors the Survivor Walk and Survivor Brunch, was also happy with the turnout for this year's Relay.

"Relay is doing wonderfully," Rogers said. "We've got just a great crowd out, beautiful weather, we couldn't ask for any nicer weather."

Rogers said the fundraiser did well prior to the actual event Friday.

"Volunteers Carla Savage and Tammy Vinson take care of the money," Rogers said. "And as of Bank Night we had \$110,000. We were so excited. Our community support has been overwhelming. It's all from our community, we couldn't do it without the community."

Rogers says the event itself shows how important cancer research is.

"I think tonight brings an awareness of the importance of that," Rogers said. "When you see the survivors walking that first lap, that's when it all comes together. We know what we're doing it for."

Cancer survivor Natasha Burks, 19, says the Relay for Life is literally a lifesaver. Burks, who was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma in 2006, has been cancer free for almost two years now, and has another wonderful blessing, her 7-week-old son Memphis.

"He is so great," Burks said. "I wouldn't trade him for anything in the world. Being a mom is the best thing that could ever happen. Our thing is he's our hope for a survivor, and it's the best thing in the world."

Burks says she appreciates everyone who

is involved in Relay.

"I love Relay," Burks said. "I support Relay with everything in my heart. It's the greatest thing in the world somebody could do for someone who has been diagnosed with cancer or is a cancer survivor."

Burks' mom, Middle Tennessee Surgical Care Scheduler Pam Hodges, says her daughter and grandson are living proof of Relay's effectiveness.

"I feel blessed, very, very blessed," said Hodges. Relay is the most wonderful non-profit organization, which helps the American Cancer Society, that I've ever been with. I did not know what it was, but now I'm going to be one voice to help get the word out about what it is, and what it does. It's so wonderful and it helps so many people with the Hope Lodge and other programs."

Burch said the event met and exceeded expectations.

"It's gone even better than we hoped," Burch said Friday night. "We set lofty goals this year and the community has come out like we knew they would, like they always do for this event. This is the biggest one by far that we've had. We were farther ahead financially coming in to tonight than we have ever been in the past. It's awesome. The community has gone out of their way, gone above and beyond to make this a success. We really appreciate it."



It's not often you see a kid in a yellow shirt riding a pink pig, but 7-year-old Jacob Lann seems to take it in stride as his dad, Dennis, looks on. The pig is actually a specially designed grill donated by Foodland Plus to be auctioned off for this year's Relay for Life.



A true KISS fan, Jack Sherrill poses with a full-size Paul Stanley cutout at the River Park Hospital Relay booth, complete with an electrically illuminated KISS sign. The River Park booth's theme was "Rock and Roll All Night to KISS Cancer Goodbye."



Above, "The Dukes of Hazzard" were reunited for this year's Relay for Life in keeping with its "Welcome Back to the 1980s" theme. Portraying the Dukes crew are, from left, Dale Sneed (Uncle Jesse), Michael Breedlove (Luke), Kaci Chilton (Daisy), Traye Cope (Bo), Rob Nunley (Cooter) and Terri Nunley (Boss Hogg).



At left, the food at this year's Relay for Life was delicious, as always, as proven by Bailey Palmer in the midst of this group of her WCHS friends. They are, front row, from left, Kalley Kominos, Palmer, Therese Miller and Jordan Dyer. Back row, Martha Harvey, Megan Sandlin and Caroline McKinley.