Man honors his late wife by setting up breast-cancer foundation

Christina Walsh was only 32 when she died of breast cancer in August. Her widower founded the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation in her memory.

Widower turns grief into a positive

By Stephen Bove
Staff Writer

In June of this year, Bob and Christina Walsh were vacationing with their 3-year-old daughter at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Their vacation was cut tragically short, however, when conditions arising from Christina's breast cancer took a tragic turn for the worse.

"While we were in Florida, things looked promising," said Walsh, of East Windsor, Mercer County. "But we were not prepared for the news that Christina had led to her death." Christina Walsh never expected it to happen so quickly.

Rather, he said his wife's death was quick, Walsh said. "We were never expected it to happen when it did." Rather, he said it came after a battle with breast cancer.

The announcement, with the hopes of providing aid to women and families affected by breast cancer, raised money through fund-raisers and donations. Walsh said the idea came about after the tragedy in Florida.

"We had to pay for an air ambulance to take her to the hospital, which cost us about $10,000," Walsh said. "Money in the bank." Walsh and Morreale said that, although Christina is no longer with them, her memory and legacy live on through the efforts of the foundation and everyone else working to help provide awareness and one day, a cure for breast cancer.

"I know that if Christina can see what we are doing," Walsh said. "I'm glad, and I'll bet a little embarrassed. She never liked being the center of attention. She never let the disease become her identity. She was a mother and a wife, never a victim."

Walsh Foundation has succeeded in organizing its largest event of two benefit concerts at Brookdale Community College, the second of which will be held Saturday and will feature Los Lonely Boys from Texas, "The Calling From Los Angeles and a third band to be announced."

The upcoming benefit concert show is not a first for Los Lonely Boys, according to Henry Garza, who plays lead guitar for the band. "We try to do benefit concerts whenever we can," Garza said. "In particular, we've done a lot of shows for The Children's Miracle Network. It just feels good to be a part of something so positive."

Morreale, who did most of the booking for the upcoming concert, said the show will feature a number of surprises and giveaways.

"We are going to be raffling off three autoographed guitars," the Long Branch resident said. "One is signed by The Calling, one by Los Lonely Boys, and a third signed by Nina Legg, Gary US Bonds and Vinnie Lopez."

Walsh said the main purpose of the foundation is to raise money for the little things that, in medical emergencies, make a huge difference. "We want to raise money for the small things that aren't always covered by insurance, like meals and hospice care," he said. "The little things that wind up becoming huge stressors.

In addition to simply raising funds, raising awareness is a major focus of the foundation. Walsh said that, with a disease that spreads as quickly as cancer, early diagnoses are crucial. "Christina was always aware of what was going on in her body. She took every precaution and caught every symptom right away," Walsh said. "All of that, and the cancer still took her in only 18 months."

Walsh said that the main message the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation wants to get across to everyone is that breast cancer is a disease in which risk factors aren't factors at all. "We want to raise awareness of the fact that this disease can strike anyone, anywhere, anytime. Christina had no history that should have led to this," Walsh said. "She didn't drink and didn't smoke. This isn't a disease that strikes elderly women. This isn't a disease that strikes sick women. This disease can strike any woman of any age, anywhere, anytime. Christina is proof of that."

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Los Lonely Boys and The Calling will perform Saturday at Brookdale Community College's Collins Arena. Tickets are $35. Doors open at 7 p.m. For more information, call (732) 251-2500.

For more information on the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation or to make a donation, call (908) 448-5420.