

Family dreams of cure for stomach cancer

You may remember Tony Leonard, who is a father of five and stomach cancer survivor.

"I'm not going to lie down," Leonard was saying 16 1/2 months ago as he recovered from a gastrectomy at Duke University Medical Center, where surgeons removed his stomach and malignant lymph nodes after a diagnosis of linitis plastica.

It is a rare malignancy, an aggressive malignancy, and 2014 hasn't been kind, either.



Bill Kirby Jr.

"Tony is regaining his strength after a rough year of surgeries and heart problems," Christy Leonard says about her husband. "Unfortunately, he is no longer able to work."

Tony and Christy Leonard know just how debilitating and life-threatening stomach cancer can be, and despite recent setbacks to his health, they continue to bring awareness to the disease, and this time with a little help from their 14-year-old son, Austin.

"This is going to be a great event," Christy Leonard says about Nov. 8, when the Leonards will be championing November as North Carolina's Curing Stomach Cancer Month as proclaimed by Gov. Pat McCrory and endorsed by U.S. Rep. Renee Ellmers and Fayetteville Mayor Nat Robertson.



Tony Leonard

Austin Leonard will unveil a flower bed at 9 a.m. in Festival Park in honor of his father and friend Chanda Holst, a breast cancer survivor. The Debbie's Dream Foundation Curing Stomach Cancer golf tournament will follow at 12:30 p.m. at Gates Four Golf & Country Club.

The entry fee for the captain's choice tournament is \$320 per team, or \$80 per golfer. Tickets for a 5 p.m. banquet range from \$20 to \$100 to \$250 and include food, raffles and prizes, including vacation getaways.

To learn more, send email inquiries to events@debbiesdream.org or Christy.l.leonard@gmail.com or call 954-475-1200.

Proceeds from the tournament will go to Debbie's Dream Foundation, says Christy Leonard, who, along with her husband, co-founded the North Carolina East Chapter of the Debbie's Dream Foundation Curing Stomach Cancer.

"Austin has asked that Tony and Chanda cut the ribbon to present the flower bed to the city of Fayetteville and dedicate this flower bed to not just stomach and breast cancer victims but to all those affected by cancer," Christy Leonard says. "And together, we're dreaming big to make the cure for stomach cancer a reality."

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A NIGHT OF MASQUERADE

Benefit gives grown-ups a chance for dress-up fun

By Chick Jacobs

Staff writer

The last time Neil Bergman dressed up for Halloween, he went trick-or-treating as the Lone Ranger.

"He was big on TV at the time," he said with a grin. "That was a little while back."

This weekend, Bergman and more than 300 other adults will wear masks and dress up — but candy and bobbing for apples won't be on the agenda. They will be part of a far dressier Halloween weekend activity.

The Child Advocacy Center plans to dress up the weekend with its inaugural Pinwheel Masquerade Ball in downtown Fayetteville. Executive Director Roberta Humphries says it will give grown-ups a chance to cut loose "without the gorilla costumes and Freddy Krueger," she added.

"It's going to be like a semiformal Halloween party for adults. Everyone will be able to have a great time and support the programs of the Child Advocacy Center."

Chairwoman Jennifer Taft said the idea of a masked ball grew from a combination of the time of year and the desire to "do something a little bit different."

"We had sponsored the Blue Jean Ball for several years," she said. "This year, we thought about doing things a little bit different, putting the focus on an adult-oriented event."

"When we realized the ball would be taking place so close to Halloween, the idea sort of clicked. A Halloween for adults fits perfectly."



Organizers of the Pinwheel Masquerade Ball include, from left, Neil Bergman, Tim Edwards, Jennifer Taft, Roberta Humphries and Howard Loughlin.

Staff photo by Cindy Burnham

PINWHEEL MASQUERADE BALL

When: 7 to 10 tonight

Where: Metropolitan Room, Hay and Green streets

Admission: \$75 per person or \$140 per couple. Some tickets may be available at the door.

Information: Call 486-9700 or go to childadvocacycenter.com

Technically, masks are optional for the ball, but Taft said she hopes people will embrace the theme.

"We're giving adults a chance to dress up a bit and have some fun. A few are decorating their own masks, and many are purchasing them. For a lot of people, it's probably the first time they've had to wear a mask in a long time."

Humphries nodded in agreement, recalling her childhood days at Halloween.

"My mother fixed me a witch's costume, all black

with a pointy hat," she said. "This is a bit more sophisticated than that."

Taft laughed and countered that climate played a bigger role in her childhood costumes.

"I grew up in upstate New York, and Halloween was always cold," she said. "My best costume was to cut holes in a big box and wrap myself up as a Christmas present. It's silly, but at least it was warm."

There's no concern about chilly temperatures for the masquerade ball, which will be in the Metropolitan Room at the old First Citizens Bank. The treats will be provided by eight local restaurants and caterers, and guests are invited to sample a pumpkin-themed martini.

"Hey, pumpkin is the flavor of the year," Taft said. "Besides, it's that time of year."

Dance lessons will be offered by local experts Chip

and Merle Modlin, and guests will be able to bid in silent and live auctions.

Proceeds will support the center's mission to prevent and stop child abuse. The Child Advocacy Center is a United Way-supported organization with works in cooperation with 19 other community groups. In the past year, more than 600 child victims of abuse were interviewed.

"Of those, 222 were under the age of 7," Humphries said. "We work within the community for prevention and intervention for these children."

A few tickets for the ball may be available at the door.

"We're close to selling all tickets," Humphries said. "It's been a very popular event. Everyone enjoys dressing up a bit and having fun."

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