

## Volunteers sought for 30-year study

Cancer fundraisers add a special appeal.

BY BILL COATS  
Times Staff Writer

NEW TAMPA — All around the Tampa Bay area, Relays for Life are extracting a memorable night and day of walking, partying and charity from their participants.

But tonight, the New Tampa Relay for Life will have a special tent for a special appeal. There, the American Cancer Society will ask donors for a blood sample and a commitment to participate in up to 30 years of research.

"My mother passed away from cancer," said Mary Ann Yaney, the media relations chairwoman for the New Tampa Relay, who plans to enroll in the study. "I want to make sure that my children and my children's children don't have to think about cancer."

The effort is the Cancer Society's latest major followup study, in which researchers survey a vast group of participants every two years about their lifestyles and health. The goal: find cancer connections that are too subtle for discovery in labs and clinics, but that emerge statistically when hundreds of thousands of health experiences are tallied over time.

The first such study, in the 1950s, linked smoking to cancer through surveys of 188,000 American men. Later studies have documented the influence of obesity, physical activity, diet, hormone use and air pollution on cancer.

The most recent study, with

1.2-million participants, began in 1982. It continues to examine a wide range of potential exposures that may affect someone's cancer risk.

Now researchers believe a new generation of subjects is needed, their health reflecting new lifestyles and environments.

"We have continued depletion of the ozone layer," said Stephanie Crawley, the Cancer Society volunteer heading the New Tampa enrollment. "We have new chemicals today. We have new fertilizers."

The Cancer Society began enrolling participants a year ago, but Friday night's New Tampa signup is the first in the Tampa Bay area. Nationwide, officials hope to enroll 500,000 people ages 30 to 65 within four years. Because a blood sample is involved, you must enroll in person.

"We have people coming in from all over the place," Crawley said.

The 31-year-old speech teacher at Mango's Colson Elementary School began volunteering for the Cancer Society a decade ago, after multiple myeloma killed her grandfather.

"The doctors kept telling us there's nothing we can do," she said.

In recent years, Crawley has learned to train others how to organize the Relays for Life, in which volunteers form teams that gather pledged donations in exchange for the team walking in a relay through the night and the next morning.

"What started out as a way of coping with grief and anger became a passion," she said.

This time of year, the Cancer Society's relays are a widespread passion, with more than 90 relays scheduled within 100 miles of Tampa. They celebrate cancer survivors and memorialize victims who died of the disease.

The New Tampa group is planning a luminaria ceremony, fol-

lowed by costume and decoration contests, karaoke and comical games. Yaney expects up to 1,000 participants.

Those numbers were part of what made New Tampa the choice for study signups, Crawley said. In addition, New Tampa is ethnically diverse, thanks to its proximity to the University of South Florida and a huge medical community, she said. Cancer rates can vary among races.

"A lot of varying races and creeds are in New Tampa, and that was a factor," she said.

It's one of 11 locations in Florida enrolling study subjects. The Cancer Society assigned Crawley to sign at least 364 subjects. Yaney hopes for 500.

In 1994, Yaney's 58-year-old mother died of colon cancer, a slowly progressing cancer that can be stopped if detected in its early years.

"She was diagnosed, and six weeks later she died, because she wasn't paying attention," Yaney said.

So Yaney, the 46-year-old sales manager for a health publication, has bought thoroughly into the drive to cure cancer.

"They got rid of smallpox," she said. "They got rid of polio. Hello!"

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## To enroll in the cancer study

You can enroll in a long-term cancer study if you're 30 to 65 years old with no personal history of cancer. You must visit the New Tampa [Relay for Life](#) between 5:30 and 9:30 p.m. today to give a blood sample and complete forms. The relay is planned for Freedom High School, 17410 Commerce Park Blvd., off Bruce B. Downs Boulevard, just southwest of Interstate 75. For information, see [www.cancer.org/docroot/RES/RES\\_6\\_6.asp?](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/RES/RES_6_6.asp?).

## Relays for Life this weekend

All begin Friday by 6 p.m. To find a Relay near you, go to [www.relayforlife.org/relay/findevent](http://www.relayforlife.org/relay/findevent).

### **Hernando County**

Spring Hill, 4057 California St., Brooksville.

### **Hillsborough County**

Plant City, One Raider Place.

New Tampa, 17410 Commerce Park Blvd.

Temple Terrace, 6925 E Fowler Ave.

SouthShore, 2002 E Shell Point Road, Ruskin.

### **Pasco County**

Wesley Chapel, 30651 Wells Road.

### **Pinellas County**

Dunedin, 373 Douglas Ave.

Pinellas Park, 5010 81st Ave. N.

Seminole, 9751 98th St. N.