Friday, June 13, 2008





Cancer study is part of Relays for Life

Participants can enroll at events today

By Lisa D. Welsh TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

WORCESTER— Donna C. Byrnes wishes she knew why she is the only person in her family who has not been diagnosed with cancer, so she will be one of the first in line to enroll in the American Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Study-3 at Worcester's Relay for Life tonight.

In addition to her immediate family of four siblings and two parents, cancer devastated both of her grandmothers, two maternal aunts and one paternal aunt.

"Why me? I'm the only one that hasn't had cancer," said Mrs. Byrnes. "Maybe they can find something about me that helped avoid it."

Relays for Life in Worcester and Southbridge will be among eight sites in the state, and 119 sites around the country, enrolling individuals in CPS-3.

The study is the latest in the American Cancer Society's quest to understand cancer. The first cancer prevention study in 1952 and the second in 1982 resulted in groundbreaking information that is now common knowledge, such as the link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer.

"This is a very important study," said Patty Ellis, a local CPS-3 volunteer coordinator. "While the studies in the past have helped us understand what can cause cancer, this one will be the first to help bring an understanding about how to prevent it. It's really exciting that people here have the opportunity to be a part of the research."

Through CPS-3, health officials hope to better understand lifestyle, behavioral, environmental and genetic factors and to ultimately eliminate cancer as a major health concern.

Mrs. Ellis explained that the enrollment at the Relays for Life is the first part of a two-phase process. Men and woman ages 30 to 65 who have no personal history of cancer will be asked to complete a brief survey, provide a waist measurement, and have a small

amount of blood drawn by a certified, trained phlebotomist. Later, from home, participants will be asked to complete a more detailed survey on their medical history, lifestyle and behaviors. The home survey is repeated every few years to update exposure information and health outcomes.

The American Cancer Society expects to enroll a half of a million people across the country in its most diverse cancer study to date.

"I truly believe that a cure for cancer will be found — that's what keeps me going," said Mrs. Byrnes, who has been involved in Worcester's Relay for Life since it began 14 years ago.

The Relay for Life in Worcester begins today at the Burncoat High School track, 179 Burncoat St. The CPS-3 enrollment will take place from 6 to 10 p.m.; the Cancer Survivors' Lap at 7:30 p.m.; the Luminaria Ceremony at 8:45 p.m.; and the closing ceremonies at 3 p.m. tomorrow.

Cancer Prevention Study-3

Previous American Cancer Society long-term follow-up studies have demonstrated:

- m The link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer
- The significant impact of being overweight or obese on risk of cancer and death
- The impact of hormones, physical activity, diet, medications and vitamins, and other factors in relation to cancer risk
- W The impact of air pollution on cardiopulmonary conditions, motivating the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to propose more stringent limits on particulate air pollution
- The link between aspirin use and reduced risk of colon cancer
- The link between postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy and gynecologic cancers such as breast and ovarian cancer
- The link between diabetes and cancers of the pancreas and colon
- The link between physical activity and lower risk of various cancers including breast, colon, and aggressive prostate cancer Source American Cancer Society

Enlarge photo



Donna C. Byrnes of Worcester holds photographs of her family members, including her mother, father, three sisters and one brother, all of whom are cancer survivors. Mrs. Byrnes will be participating in the Relay for Life today.

(T&G Staff/TOM RETTIG)

Enlarge photo

The Relay for Life in Southbridge begins today at McMahon Field, at 25 Cole Ave. The CPS-3 enrollment will be held from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m.; the Cancer Survivors' Lap at 6:15 p.m.; the Luminaria Ceremony at 9 p.m.; and the closing ceremonies at 1 p.m. tomorrow.