

Melanie Brodeur Opening Ceremonies Speech

Good Morning Everyone,

For those of you who didn't catch that introduction or don't already know me, my name is Melanie Brodeur. And if the name didn't give it away, this foundation is incredibly important to me because I am the middle child of Terri Brodeur. For those of you who don't know my story, let me give you a brief background as to why I'm standing before you this morning. Back in 2005, two amazing woman, Sandy Maniscalco and the late Norma Logan, had an incredible vision of a foundation that would donate 100% of the funds raised, directly to cancer research. They made this foundation a reality and they named it in honor of my mother. My Mother, Terri Brodeur, was diagnosed at the age of 39 with stage 4 breast cancer. And after a 2 year battle, she tragically lost her life on October 11, 2005. Unfortunately, my family's pain is not unique, so many families have experienced this same sad story. It's hard to imagine a family who hasn't lost a parent, grandparent, sibling, child or other relative to this disease. And they are why we are all here today.

This year, I am overjoyed to hear that our walker count is up by about 20%, 145 of those being first time walkers. It's a pleasure and honor to welcome all of you to the annual walk across southeastern Connecticut, along with all of our incredible returning walkers. Some who have walked the full marathon for the last 13 years!

This year marks the 14th annual TBBCF walk. And wow how these years have flown by. I was recently reminded of how little and cute my brother Sean used to be when I saw a photo of him walking his very first walk when he was only 9 years old. If you haven't had a chance to, I

encourage you to read the article he wrote about his experience, which is posted on the TBBCF website. To no one's surprise, he's still managed to hold on to those good looks.

When I reflect on how the three of us have grown over the past 14 years, I can't help the swelling sense of pride and joy at how far we've come and where we are heading. My siblings are both reaching incredible accomplishments going into their senior year of their respective programs; my brother at UCONN school of engineering and my sister at Touro College of Dental Medicine. Not only did we have incredible role models in our guardians to look up to, and an amazing support system in our family and friends...we also always had this foundation. The foundation and this event in particular, were something we always had to look forward to.

Despite the fact that this is a little bittersweet, this walk has become a therapeutic exercise for me, to help me grieve, and also to reflect on how lucky I am. Some people might think that the idea of being lucky to spend the majority of your Saturday walking a marathon is up for debate. But I, along with all of you, feel fortunate and grateful to be here. We are the loved ones and the survivors. We are the ones who won't stop stomping our feet and demanding a cure. We are the ones who are here to represent the fallen and to honor their memories by ensuring that the number of cancer victims continues to steadily decline, until this disease has been fully eradicated. We will keep walking.

And together, we are making incredible progress. At the end of 2018, the foundation had raised in total \$4.4 million dollars, since its inception in 2006. With these funds, the foundation has been able to grant forty-four \$100,000 research grants. Despite much progress, we're still not there and we will keep walking until we are.

If I can be so selfish as to ask that you all do me a favor. The next time you are in a circle of friends, in the office, or meet someone you don't know, consider mentioning this incredible foundation. Help get our name out there so that we can raise more money, fund more research, and someday accomplish that goal of eradicating cancer. Let's honor our loved ones who have succumbed to this disease, help our sisters who are fighting it and continue to do our part to achieve a better, cancer free future.

Thank you all so much for your time, your commitment and your strength. Together we are making a difference!

Now let's make the most of this beautiful day! I look forward to seeing you all at the finish!