Brodeur cancer fund hoping for pink debut in Westerly

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WESTERLY — The Terri Brodeur Foundation, one of the region's largest breast cancer awareness organizations, found the perfect way to make its debut in Westerly — on center stage and in the pink.



October, of course, is breast cancer awareness month. On Sunday, "The Pink Show," a show of support for a breast cancer cure, will take place at the Granite Theatre, marking the foundation's first full-scale local event. Sponsored by the Greater Westerly-Pawcatuck Chamber of Commerce and the Rhode Island Blood Center, the show will include a special matinée performance of "Sound of Music," lunch and a short program honoring several local women. Guests are being asked to wear something pink to the event.

"We really wanted to create a presence in the Westerly-Pawcatuck area," said Mary DeVizia, executive director of the Waterford-based Terri Brodeur Breast Cancer Foundation. "We want to be part of the greater Westerly-Pawcatuck area and we thought this would be the perfect way.

DeVizia said that the local women being honored, all "dynamic women with wonderful energy," are Angie Smith and Joanne French of Westerly and Cathleen Holland of Stonington. The show is being held in honor of Lauri Luzzi of Westerly who lost her battle earlier this year, according to DeVizia.

"All the stars aligned perfectly," said DeVizio, "to have it in October during breast cancer awareness month and to have it in honor of these wonderful women."

Smith, who received a diagnosis of stage 3 breast cancer in 1982, said receiving the news "was just a small setback to my life, never altering my plans for having a good time."

"I never looked back, just moved on with my life," she said. "My goal is to continue to volunteer for anything that may be needed…I love life…I love to have fun."

French received a cancer diagnosis in 1995, and again each year between 2005 and 2008. She will celebrate four years of being disease free in December.

"What cancer and hardships have done with my life didn't change as much as it made me discover what to do with my life," said French. "I'm here for a reason, and every day when I wake up with both feet on the ground, it's another day for me to discover another part of my journey."

Holland was 32 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Life as she knew it, she said, “became transformed forever.”

Holland, who founded the “Women’s Breast Cancer Support Group” at the Westerly Hospital said she conquered the disease with a combination of eastern and western medicine, and has focused on sharing her story and the gifts she received as a result of it. She said she has met women of “great strength, insight and love, and has worked to promote community involvement, raise funds, and provide resources and guidance.

“I focus on putting cancer behind me, but I have great respect for what it’s done for my life,” she said. “I choose to take my positive energy and focus on life’s great possibilities.”

The late Lauri Murray Luzzi, who was the office manager for Northeast Family Martial Arts for many years, “spent her short life making others happy,” according to DeVizia.

“The common element in all of these women is that cancer changed their lives,” she said. “It made them grateful for every day they were given, helped show them what was most valuable in their lives, and showed them that life is to be lived to the fullest. The three survivors of cancer are filled with energy, positive spirit and inspiration.”
Ticket sales have been steady, according to Lisa Konicki, the chamber’s executive director.

“I’m very excited about this event,” she said. “I want the Granite Theatre to be a sea of pink in honor of both breast cancer awareness and the Terri Brodeur Cancer Foundation coming to our community.”

The foundation is named for the late Terri Brodeur, who, as a young mother of three young children lost her life to breast cancer. The foundation was established in 2006 by two friends, the late Norma Logan and Westerly resident Sandy Maniscalco. Brodeur succumbed to the disease in 2005, Logan one year later.

“We need to tip our hats to all these women,” added Konicki. “They have made a difference and now we can.”
Tickets for the show are $30. Lunch will be donated by 84 Tavern On Canal, Sandy’s Fruits and Vegetables, Dunn’s Corners Markets, Haversham Inn, The Brazen Hen, the Ocean House and S&P Oyster House. A selection of pink wines and sparkling wines has been donated by The Wine Store. Tickets are available from the Brodeur Foundation www.tbbcf.org or by calling 860-245-0402.