

YWCA's Discover Pink Walk a success at new location

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Breast cancer is so prevalent, the camaraderie of its victims and their loved ones can surface almost anywhere.

Dorothy Tessler, 58, of Keizer experienced that just a couple of weeks ago when she met a stranger while shopping for pink-themed items in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

"I had a chance meeting with a lady who had lost her daughter in law whom she loved so much," said Tessler, an annual participant in the Discover Pink Walk. "I ran into her in the Dollar Store in Keizer. Her daughter in law was 56 ... I just wanted to hug her and say I am walking for your daughter-in-law, and proud that I can do that."

She did just that.

Tessler walked with a team called the Pinkies, consisting of Jackie Sabin of Keizer; Jackie Pierce of West Salem, Jeni Wood and Erica Lindstrom of northeast Salem, along with toddlers Logan Wood and Emma Lindstrom.

Pierce is Tessler's sister-in-law and a breast cancer survivor.

Team Pinkies members were among more than 600 walkers who turned out for a crisp autumn stroll today, taking part in the Discover Pink Walk fundraiser launched from the new YWCA building.

Walk coordinator Karla Iverson said this was an especially important year for the event, which funds breast cancer screening women who can't otherwise afford it.

Participants had a choice of two walk courses: one 2.6-mile course, and the other a 3.7-mile one. The latter meandered through the Salem Saturday Market where they were welcomed by pink-balloon arches.

Walk sponsors coordinator Terra Naught said there were 37 teams that participated, including YWCA neighbor Subway Sandwich, which assembled a creative pink-balloon, sandwich-shaped "float."



DANIELLE PETERSON | Statesman Journal

Sarah Johnson, 5, and Elizabeth Salaz dance during the Salem YWCA Discover Pink Walk today. The walk provides the YWCA with money for breast cancer screening for local women in Marion and Polk counties who have breast cancer symptoms, who make a low income, and who are either uninsured or under-insured.

Learn more

Find more information about the Discover Pink Walk at
www.ywcasalem.org/discoverpink

Presenting sponsors were Salem Hospital, Salem Radiology Consultants and Diagnostic Imaging.

This was the first year that the walk began at the YWCA at Broadway and Market Street NE. With a change in location, routes and date for the walk, organizers were especially pleased with the turnout. And that success was vital.

“The Oregon Breast and Cervical Cancer program is struggling this year, so the need for funds for mammogram and ultrasound (check ups) is up since they are able to offer less help,” Iverson said. “So we are working more (independently).”

Iverson stressed that money raised by the Women’s Health Program at YWCA Salem is to ensure that low-income uninsured and under-insured women in Marion and Polk counties get breast cancer screenings. Women who are diagnosed early have a 5-year survival rate of 98 percent. Women diagnosed in later stages have a 26-percent survival rate.

“While the federally funded Oregon Breast and Cervical Cancer Program is available to low income women, and the program is working hard to cover as many women as they can, the program funding doesn’t cover nearly as many women as are eligible — especially women under 50,” Iverson said.

Tessler said she’s happy for the opportunity to be part of the solution.

“I’m just so glad we live in a society where we can do this. We can band together and fight this,” she said. “I really enjoy the camaraderie of the whole event and of (people) coming together and giving each other support and encouragement.”