

Kick for the Cure Around Ohio



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A Community for the Cure

Green High School in Northeast Ohio has turned its Kick for the Cure event into one of the biggest in Ohio

By Tim Rogers, Ohio Prep Sportswriters Association

GREEN – If this keeps up the organizers of the Kick For The Cure at Green High School will need to consider a name change for their fund-raising event that has been held each fall for the last eight years.

How about The BIG Kick For The Cure?

Why? Because the event keeps getting bigger and better each year and the 2014 version, held on September 13, was a record-setter.

“When we started we never dreamed it would become as big as it has,” said Karen Harlock, who co-chairs the event with her husband, Neil, and is one of about 12 volunteers who have been involved with the event since its 2007 inception. “Back then we just wanted to help out for that one day, to be involved. Then we came back the second year and so on. Now, I don’t think any of us are ready to step away.”

The event began in the fall of 2007 as a show of support for Shawn Basone, the wife of soccer coach Jeff Basone, who was diagnosed with cancer earlier that year. While Shawn sadly passed away in 2008, her memory lives on.

Anyone spending time in and around Green can testify that the Southern-most community in Summit County has always been a strong supporter of the high school and its athletes. Its facilities, for everything from the band to baseball, are top notch. Green Memorial Stadium, site of the Kick For The Cure, is one of the best in Northeast Ohio.

Undoubtedly, the Kick For The Cure is a community-driven event. So, it comes as no surprise that the community has helped the soccer-based cancer fund-raiser become a rousing success.

It was an all-day affair featuring varsity soccer games, youth games and clinics, a 50-50 raffle, t-shirt sales, face-painting, a dunk tank, music, basket raffles and a silent auction.

“It was like a carnival,” said Green Athletic Director Erich Muzi. “There seemed to be something for everyone.”

Most of the event’s corps of volunteers became involved for different reasons. Some became involved because they or someone in their family has dealt with cancer. Others have had children progress through the Green youth soccer program to the high school program.

Others have simply had children at the high school.

“We have a very dedicated group of people who are heavily involved,” said Dennis Guilmette, the fund-raising chairman. “Some of them have had children graduate yet they still stay involved.”

Guilmette and Harlock are two of those. Harlock’s two daughters, Rachel and Melissa, played soccer before graduating a few years ago and Guilmette’s daughter, Ashley, is in the class of 2015. Both families have dealt with the cancer issue. Harlock lost her mother and brother to the disease and Guilmette’s parents have fought it.

“I guess that’s the passion most of us have,” said Guilmette. “I know that is what drives me. I have no intention of stepping away.”

Guilmette said the event has become a family affair for all the committee members.

“The families of every committee member have gotten involved,” he said. “Wives, husbands, children. Even the kids who have graduated and gone off to college come back to participate. It’s a testament to the community involvement.”

The organization’s track record of raising money is remarkable. This year’s event raised a record \$24,304.62, raising the total amount in seven years to \$100,304. That’s an average of \$14,757 per year as the initial event was not used as a major fund raiser. Not bad for a one-day happening.

“It amazes me,” Guilmette said of the figure. “Absolutely amazes me. When I started I never imagined we would reach that figure and the first couple of years it was a struggle. A lot of people are not real comfortable about going to businesses asking for donations. I can remember going to places five and six times asking for help and I think they paid me just to get rid of me.”

To show you how things have changed Guilmette says it usually takes just one visit and people are ready to open their checkbooks.

“We couldn’t do this without the support of the community,” said Brenda Vaccaro, who has been involved with the project every year, first as a committee member and now as a volunteer. “When I think back to the first year when we raised about \$4,300 to what was done

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this year. I have never had a business turn me down when I approached them asking for a donation.”

Typical Green, they will say.

Each year the organizers designate two charities to which they donate. Camp Quality and the Hospice Care Center of Akron General Hospital’s Visiting Nurse Service were this year’s recipients. Camp Quality is a weeklong camping experience for children with cancer with no cost to the family.

“Kick For The Cure is a kid’s event,” said Guilmette. “Originally, we had other charities that we chose, such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation, but we wanted to select charities that focused on children affected by cancer.”

The events included two varsity games. The Green boys played nearby Louisville while the girls squared off against North Canton Hoover. Harlock said the involvement of a Louisville group of parents put this year’s event over the top.

“We’ve always had great support from the other schools involved, but the Louisville people were great,” she said. “We had raised about \$12,000 before the day of the event and the Louisville people were responsible for about \$3,500 of that.”

It’s no wonder that next year’s games will be Green vs. Louisville. “The North Canton Hoover people were great and they were part of the event for a long time,” said Harlock. “But they did their share.”

Guilmette and Harlock said they never dreamed the event would grow each year, that more people would become involved and more money would be raised.

“At the end of the day my feeling was one of satisfaction,” said Guilmette. “But I also couldn’t believe how well it has been received by the community. I am amazed at how big it has become and the amount of money we have raised. It is important that we don’t get disappointed if we don’t set a record each year. That would be kind of unrealistic.”

Unrealistic, perhaps. But it won’t be for lack of effort. That’s how things go in Green.

