

## Three chosen to lead Relay For Life survivor lap

Written by Deb Egenberger  
Thursday, 26 May 2016 14:38 -

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Three Dawson County cancer survivors will lead the Lap of Hope at the 2016 American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Dawson County at 6 p.m. on Friday, June 10, at the Lexington High School track.

Deb James of Lexington, Amalia Cañas of Cozad and Loyd Hickey of Overton were chosen by organizers and team captains to be the honorary chairpersons of this year's Relay event. Each has his or her own story of living with cancer, but all experienced the fear and worry that comes with diagnosis, the comfort of family and friends and a new-found appreciation for each day.

The survivors lap kicks off the night by celebrating the strength and courage of all those diagnosed with cancer. All cancer survivors and their caregivers are invited and encouraged to attend. Plan to arrive around 5-5:30 p.m. to register and receive a commemorative survivor purple T-shirt.

For more information, contact Jennifer Norseen, event leadership team chairperson, at (308) 325-2107 or email [dawsonrelay@gmail.com](mailto:dawsonrelay@gmail.com).

Deb James, Lexington

"Did I really have cancer? It all happened so fast," said Deb James of Lexington.

One week she was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer and a few months later, she was cancer free after choosing a double mastectomy.

In May 2014, James went in for her annual mammogram.

"I've always been sure to get an annual mammogram because my niece was 38 years old when she passed away with breast cancer. She fought for four years," she said.

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The test revealed a lump the size of a golf ball so deep in her left breast that she didn't feel it during regular self-exams.

After two biopsy procedures that both confirmed cancer, James chose to have a double mastectomy in July 2014 and did not have to go through any radiation or chemotherapy treatments.

James came to watch last year's luminaria slide show.

"I cried through that just because I had been there and others were not so lucky. Sometimes I ask why I was so lucky," she said.

Amalia Cañas, Cozad

"Pope Paul said it best, 'Do not be afraid,'" said 77-year-old Amalia Reyes Cañas of Cozad.

Cañas was diagnosed with advanced stage 4 breast cancer last September after a tumor on her breast burst at home.

As one of 15 brothers and sisters growing up, Cañas did not visit doctors during her life. Money was tight and their mother did the best she could to treat illnesses.

Cañas was aware of the softball-sized tumor on her breast, but didn't tell anyone and was afraid to go to the doctor.

"You always think...no, not me," Cañas said. "I never could find the right words to tell anyone."

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All of the family, including husband David and their four children, went to the oncologist together where they learned if nothing was done, Cañas would live four months. They left it up to Amalia, and she chose to fight.

Loyd Hickey, Overton

“One day at a time” takes on a whole new meaning when cancer is diagnosed, and Loyd Hickey of Overton looks at life a lot differently these days. The small things mean so much more and each day is a gift to this hard-working family man.

Hickey was diagnosed in April 2015 with multiple myeloma, a bone marrow cancer.

“It is smoldering right now,” he said. “I have it, but it’s not doing anything.”

He goes to work at Cornhusker Energy ethanol plant in Lexington every day, shows no symptoms of illness and has no schedule of treatments to follow.

Hickey’s family keeps him going strong. His wife, Mary Ann, their two daughters and two granddaughters will join him for the survivors lap at Relay For Life.

“I’m very proud and honored to be chosen as one of this year’s chairpersons,” Hickey said. “I would like to thank everyone for choosing me and for all Relay For Life does in the fight against cancer.”