Relay awards luminaria, add finishing touches.

Reading more than 700 names broke the solemn silence during the 15th Annual American Cancer Society Relay For Life luminaria ceremony at Cozad High School on Aug. 18.

Relay committee members, team captains and team members gathered to put the finishing touches on the 2009 relay event that was rained out in July.

Richard Johnson of Lexington read the names honoring cancer survivors and remembering those lost to cancer as those attending silently followed each name displayed on a screen.

To conclude the event, everyone walked a symbolic lap around the cafeteria to signify the end of this year's relay and the beginning of the continued fight to find a cure for cancer.

"Our Relay For Life is a testament to what each of us as individuals can do when we work together," said Coleen Favinger. "We get together and make things happen in Dawson County." Favinger and Deb Tvrdy, both of Cozad, co-chaired the event.

The Spirit Award for 2009 went to Chris Barnes of Cozad. This special recognition is the result of an open vote among team captains and committee members to recognize the person who demonstrates the relay spirit and a continued determination to fight cancer.

Barnes is a two-time cancer survivor and has been an active team member and team captain, as well as serving on the committee for several years. This year, she and her husband, Lynn, were survivor committee co-chairs organizing survivor invitations, registrations and activities.

The top two Miss Relay contestants who delivered their dripping dollar bills to the finance trailer after the downpour during the relay event were recognized with certificates and gifts.

Winning the title of Miss Relay 2009 was Aaron Hueftle of Eustis with a total of $167.06 for the Rolling Meadows 4-H Club A team. A very close runner up was Shawn Lux of Lexington with a total of $166 for the To-Ti-Ella team.

The evening's meeting also celebrated successful fundraising efforts. Finance chairperson Julie McNett reported a grand total of $88,138.91 raised by Relay teams and corporate sponsor donations. The total included a record-breaking on-line fundraising total of $4,750.

The top fundraising team with $7,974.44 was Women's Cancer Support Group Garden of Hope 1. Team captain Pam Ackerman of Lexington was named top individual fundraiser with $2,325.40.

The Garden of Hope 2 team raised $3,380.50 bringing the combined total for the support group up to $11,354.94.

The top five fundraising teams also included Plum Creek Medical Group, $6,000; The "Block" Party, $5,077.24; Cozad FCCLA, $4,377.70; and Cozad State Bank Care-N For the One You Love, $4,157.84.

The top youth fundraising team was Cozad FCCLA with team member Brooke Banzhaf being the top youth individual fundraiser with $430. Rolling Meadows 4-H Club A from Eustis raised $1,708.15 and the Cool Kids of Cozad raised $605.

Eight individuals were recognized for raising $1,000 or more in 2009. Those receiving a Relay For Life $1,000 Club t-shirt were: Pam Ackerman of Lexington, Peg Butler of Cozad, Verla Montey of Cozad, Christina Wagener of Lexington, Michelle Medo of Lexington, Jan Lichtenwalter of Lexington, Stephanie Block of Lexington and Chris Barnes of Cozad.

Teams recognized in the Fundraising Club (determined by fund-raiser dollars turned in at bank night) included:

Gold ($5,000-$9,999)—Plum Creek Medical Group

Silver ($3,500-$4,999)—WCSG Garden of Hope 1, The “Block” Party, Care-N for the One You Love, Tri-County Hospital and RSCS.

Bronze ($1,500-$3,499)—FCCLA Team, Rainbow of Hope, WCSG Garden of Hope 2, Church Ladies, Relay Angels, Family Night Out for a Cure, Grace Lutheran, Shocktastics and Rolling Meadows 4-H Club A.

The following corporate sponsors donated a total of $14,005 to the 2009 Relay For Life:

Sword of Hope ($1,000 or more)—Tenneco, Orthman Family Foundation, Cozad State Bank and Trust, Eilers Machine and Welding Inc.

Platinum ($500-$999)—The Feed Store, Car-Bar Cattle Co, Davis Family Dental LLC, ServiceMaster of Mid-Nebraska, Security First Bank Cozad, Nebraskaland Tire, Tri-County Hospital, Platte Valley Auto Mart

Gold ($250-$499)—Brad and Robin Staton, Plum Creek Motors, Downey Drilling Inc., Bradley E. Brandenberg and Associates P.C., Pony Express Chevrolet

Silver ($100-$249)—Little Caesar's Pizza, U-Save Pharmacy, Plum Creek Care and Wel-Life, Bruce and Julia Rickertsen, Blasé-Strauser Memorial Chapel, Dr. David Hult in Gothenburg, JM's Cards and Gifts, Martin Electric, Linden's Plumbing, Fairview Vet Clinic, Kirby Plumbing Inc., First State Bank, Barmore Drug Store, Arlan Ackerman Construction, Lexington Animal Clinic, Bruce L. Hanson DDS PC, Doran Post and Associates, City of Lexington Employee Committee

Bronze ($50-$99)—First Bank and Trust Eustis Branch, Mike's Electric, Drive-In Videos, David W McNally CPA, Photography by Dee Ann

Others ($1-$49)—Lexington Community Foundation, W. Wesley Lubberstedt PC, Thomas G. Fagot DDS.

In addition, many in-kind donations for supplies and equipment were provided by Plum Creek Market Place, Culligan, Sign Pro, Mac's Short Stop, Orscheln Farm and Home in Lexington, VVS Inc., Peterson's Grocery, Casey's General Store, Runza Cozad, Subway Cozad, Subway Lexington Highway 30, Subway WalMart, McDonald's Lexington, WalMart, Hi-Gain Feedlot Cozad and Farnam, Keiser Feedlot Gothenburg, Darr Feedlot, Casey's General Store, John Wrage of Alltel Cozad/Gothenburg, Eilers Machine and Welding, Cozad Golf Course, Fairbanks International and the City of Lexington.

Volunteering time and effort for preparations and post event cleaning were Glenn Hawks, Sam Tingelhoff and Doug Monter with their crew from Lexington City Services Department, Brad Wagener Construction and Arlan Ackerman Construction. Stella Beenblossom and the staff at Camp Comeca in Cozad cooked and delivered the sloppy joes for the evening meal.