

Lights to shine in honor of survivors and in memory of those lives lost

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A special luminaria ceremony during the American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Dawson County remembers those lost to cancer and honors those who have battled and won.

The luminaria candle lighting to represent these individuals is on Friday, July 12, at 9:30 p.m. at Lake Helen in Gothenburg.

A special slide show also will “put a face” to many of the names on the luminaria bags around the track. Organizers expect 1,500 luminaria to light the way throughout the night for the 150-plus team members signed up to participate in this year’s Relay event.

Anyone desiring to purchase a luminaria may do so by contacting April Headley, luminaria chairperson, at 308-486-5231. Each luminaria candle is \$10.

“It will be beautiful when all the bags with candles are illuminated around the sidewalks,” said Headley. “We hope to sell enough to light the entire area.”

The history of the luminaria ceremony begins back in 1987 when Seattle was preparing for their first Relay For Life. They had arranged for lights but discovered at about noon on the day of the event that, for some reason, the lights weren’t going to work.

One of the members suggested lining the track with luminaria bags to enable the participants to see the track as they walked or ran. The committee immediately purchased what they needed to implement the “luminaria light” idea.

When they lit the candles in the bags that night, it changed the atmosphere at the track. The soft lighting was conducive to talking about why everyone was there—to fight cancer and honor those who had survived and those who had lost the battle.

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The next year, the Relay For Life of Tacoma committee (who had heard about what a beautiful experience the candles had produced) and a few other Relay committees included a luminaria ceremony, honoring cancer survivors and remembering those who had lost the battle. Everyone who took part in the luminaria ceremony was deeply touched. The ceremony grew in popularity and eventually became part of Relay For Life events across the country.

Relay For Life is a fun-filled, overnight event. Teams of eight to 15 members gather with tents and sleeping bags to participate in the largest fund-raising walk in the nation.

Area cancer survivors will kick off the Relay For Life on July 12, at 6 p.m. with the official survivors' lap; then the rest of the participants will join the fun. Information about purchasing a luminaria, forming a team or walking in the survivors' lap is available by calling Pam Ackerman, event chairperson, at 308-324-2230.