

## Lake Helen is site for annual Dawson County Relay For Life

Written by Pam Ackerman  
Thursday, 11 July 2013 13:14 -

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Bicycles and candles will light up the night at the 19th Annual American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Dawson County on Friday, July 12, at Lake Helen in Gothenburg.

Cancer survivor “Willie” Martin Stoddard of Cozad and a dedicated group of bikers will ride a lap or two with flashing lights coiled on their bike frames.

“The bicycle ride with the lighted luminaria candles promises to be an impressive part of this year’s Relay For Life,” said Pam Ackerman, event chairperson, of Lexington. “I’m always amazed at the creativity and imagination that adds that extra special flair to our event.”

The Light Up The Night Bike Ride will be after the luminaria ceremony which starts at 9:30 p.m. Stoddard, 30, also will be the luminaria ceremony speaker.

At age 17 and a senior in high school, he was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. He had chemotherapy treatments for three and a half years which led to having both hips and his right knee replaced.

“I went through treatments at Children’s Hospital in Omaha. At 6-foot-3, I felt like a giant there,” Stoddard said. He added there isn’t a better way to say it other than “cancer sucks.”

“Cancer is a terrible and devastating disease. It changes everything in your life,” he said. “Organizations like Relay For Life helped out my family and I when I was going through my treatments. Three trips to Omaha and back can be very costly. But the ability to be in my own home, in my own bed was absolutely amazing.

“That is why I try to be as active as I can in the Relay.”

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This is his third year as a team member with The Church Ladies. Last year when it was dark at Relay, Stoddard started thinking about how amazing it would be to have bikers with flashing lights riding around for a while. "I talked it over with friends and asked to get it in this year since it is at the park," he said. "I'm expecting roughly 10 riders there, maybe less, maybe more."

The luminaria ceremony and bike ride are just a couple of many events and activities as everyone works to "Round Up A Cure," Ackerman said. "Everyone is invited to attend the Relay. This is a community event to raise awareness about cancer and the American Cancer Society as well as provide a fun atmosphere for family."

Survivors and caregivers kickoff the overnight event with the Lap of Hope at 6 p.m. All cancer survivors and caregivers are encouraged to arrive early to register at the survivor booth between 4:30-5:30 p.m.

The Silent Auction from 6 to 9 p.m. will be under the south restroom shelter area at Lake Helen. Some of the items on the auction will be a Husker wagon, Jack Hoffman rookie trading cards, homemade quilts, cowboy art and auto detail. Many more items are expected.

Team walking starts around 6:30 p.m. Fifteen teams will have at least one team member on the walking path at all times throughout the night. Many teams will be selling "round up" style food and drinks. A root beer saloon, trail mix, beef jerky, walking tacos, pulled pork sandwiches, campfire ham and beans, cotton candy and snow cones are on the menu.

Activities, games and fundraisers start around 7 p.m. with highlights on the Miss Relay Contest, Locks of Love, karaoke, jail and bail, tattoos, pony rides and a bouncy house. The American Cancer Society Mission Booth features a Ranch Rodeo competition and informational brochures. ACS Advocacy will fill the I Am Hope banner with notes to legislators asking for support to fight cancer.

Miss Relay will be crowned at 8:45 p.m. and will participate in a line dance. A \$100 Walmart Gift Card will be given away around 9 p.m. Tickets are available from any team captain or at the Relay for \$1 each or six for \$5.

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At 9:15 p.m., Chris Barnes of Cozad will celebrate 40 years as a cancer survivor with a special lap with family and friends.

As midnight approaches, a scavenger hunt, team laps and voting for Spirit Award are on the schedule. Quiet time starts at 2 a.m. Participants continue walking until dawn. A closing ceremony and last lap for 2013 officially begins the 2014 cancer fighting year, Ackerman said.

“Cancer doesn’t stop and neither do we,” she said. “Dawson County stands out as one of the best Relay events in the area. We have the support of the communities and the business leaders both with corporate sponsorships and in-kind donations. And this trail crew of captains and team members is one of the best around. We certainly can Round Up A Cure in 2013. Let’s finish the fight!”

SCHEDULE	
3:30 p.m.	Set up campfires
4:30-5:30 p.m.	Survivor & Team Registration—Chris & Lynn Barnes
	Assemble survivors and caregivers by the stage
5:45 p.m.	Invocation, Pastor Megan Morrow
	Introduce Honorary Chairpersons
6 p.m.	Lap of Hope, Survivor & Caregiver Lap
	Silent Auction Opens
6:15 p.m.	Howdy from the “Trail Boss”
	Flag Raising, Gothenburg Interact Club
	National Anthem, Rebecca Underwood
	Sponsor, Committee, Captain, Grand Club Recognition
6:30 p.m.	Team Walking Begins
7 p.m.	Locks of Love, Tiffany Carlson assisted by Dallas Zimbelman
	Miss Relay Contestants Introduced, FCCLA Park Ladies
	Relay Ranch Rodeo, ACS Mission, Christina Wagener
	I Am Hope Barnes, ACS Advocacy, Richard Johnson
	Karaoke Competition Booth, Peterson’s Supermarket
	Bounce House, Warriors for Cancer
	Jail and Bail, Warriors for Cancer
	Air Brush Tattoos, Amber Wolfe Montoya
	Pony Rides—Buck’s Buckaroo
8:30 p.m.	Miss Relay Contest Ends
8:45 p.m.	Miss Relay Coronation & Line Dance
9 p.m.	Silent Auction Closes
	Star Walkman Gift Card Drawing
9:15 p.m.	Tr A Survivor Lap, Celebrating 40 years, Chris Barnes of Cozad
9:30 p.m.	Luminaria Ceremony
	Light Luminarias
	The Faces of Cancer Slide Show, April Heudley
11 p.m.	Light Up the Night Bike Lap—Willie Stoddard
Midnight-2 a.m.	Scavenger Hunt, Team Laps, Vote for Spirit Award
2 a.m.	Quiet Time Begins
6:30 a.m.	Light Back Ceremony—Richard Johnson
	Team/Individual Recognition
	Closing Remarks
	Music by Diversified Sound and Light, Mike & Christina Wolff, Gothenburg
	FOOD FUNDRAISERS AT RELAY
	■ Walking Tacos, Salsa & Chips—Holy Walkatholies, Gothenburg
	State Bank
	■ Pulled Pork or Chicken Sandwich, Bake Sale Items—R.S.C.S. & Kool Kids
	■ Show Comes—Warriors for Cancer
	■ Cotton Candy—Gothenburg Youth Rotary
	■ Corned Beef & Beans with Corn Bread—WCSG Garden of Hope
	■ Western Root Beer Saloon, Trail Mix & Beef Jerky—The Church Ladies