

Strides For Life Lung Cancer Run

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On April 11, Tempe will do its part to fight one of the biggest killers in the country: lung cancer.



Laurie Carson, a part-time resident of Carefree as well as founder and president of the Lung Cancer Research Association, will be bringing Strides For Life Arizona to the Tempe Arts Park. The proceeds of the fun run/walk will all go to help lung cancer research and, as Carson hopes, increase awareness about this deadly disease.

Originally from Southampton, New York, Carson's involvement in the lung cancer world is extremely personal. The disease became a huge part of her life when in a matter of months it claimed the lives of both her brother and her uncle. Her brother, 48, had never smoked a cigarette in his life. Her uncle, 70, had quit smoking over 20 years before being diagnosed. Her whole family was in shock since none of them believed these men were at risk of dying from lung cancer. "Their passing is what launched me into action," says Carson.

She had been working with the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center for some time and began to look into what types of foundations there were for lung cancer research. What she discovered was a major shortage of funding and awareness for the disease, especially considering how many people are affected.

Estimates from the American Cancer Society show that there will be almost 220,000 new cases of lung cancer diagnosed in the United States each year. Almost 160,000 patients will die. Despite there being a widely publicized Breast Cancer Month in October, lung cancer, whose little-known month is November, kills more women than breast cancer and gynecological cancers combined.

Carson says that there is somewhat of a stigma associated with lung cancer. "A lot of people just assume that people had a smoking history and so they are very quick to use the 'blame the victim' mentality," she says. In reality, about 15% of people who are diagnosed with lung cancer are nonsmokers. With the LCRF and its board of directors, all of whom have been touched by lung cancer in some way, Carson is trying to educate the public and help them understand that there are other risk factors involved. The walk has become a big part of educating people about the disease.

After seeing an ad on TV for a walk for Multiple Sclerosis, Carson did some research and realized there were no fundraising walks to benefit lung cancer. In the five years that the walk has occurred in Southampton, they have raised over \$1.7 million.

Now that Carson lives in Carefree for half the year, she decided that Arizona's philanthropic community would be the perfect place to launch another event. This time, the proceeds will go to Arizona's Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen). Tempe mayor Hugh Hallman is going to declare April 11 Strides For Life Day and Harkins Theater is also helping with promotions. If Strides For Life is a success, she hopes to make it an annual event in Tempe.