

Relay from 1A

Brenda Webber, who represented the American Cancer Society this year, said, “I joke that we’re ‘nickel and diming’ cancer to death, because we truly are. Relay For Life is the No. 1 funder of the American Cancer Society, which is the No. 1 private funder of cancer research in the world.”

This year, the event was only 12 hours long, instead of the traditional 24 hours. “It was a shorter event, but we had great turnout and a lot of fun,” Hundley said. “Several entertainment events were very well attended and the community really came out and supported us.” A crowd filled the park’s bleachers as members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars pre-

sented the color guard and 11-year-old Nyah Vollmar sang the national anthem. Three Rivers Casino Resort provided the stage and sound equipment for the live performances throughout the day. Specialty laps prompted relay walkers to wear mustaches, wigs and other silly props. Cheerleaders from Siuslaw High School cheered everyone on and walked with youth on the Children’s Lap. During the opening Survivor and Caregiver Laps, some of the cheerleaders held carnations over the participants’ heads and told them, “You are a fighter.”

Relay walkers, teams and guests could listen to live music from the Johnny Kallas Band, local singers, theater camp students and Adams and Hardisty. Al Rojas also provided a magic show with audience involvement. Florence Got Talent! returned for the fourth year, with 15 applicants in three different age groups. Winners received ribbons and prizes, with first place receiving \$100, second place receiving \$50 and third winning a \$25 Amazon gift card.



PHOTO BY DEBBIE GOLOB

Members of the Zumba team from Coastal Fitness gather for a quick photo-op Saturday morning before providing entertainment at this year’s Relay For Life at Miller Park.

Vollmar won in the youngest category, Brooklyn Cahoon won in the 13 to 18 category and Rojas won with his magic tricks in the adult category. Rain in the late afternoon and evening prompted the closing of karaoke, Hundley said. “It didn’t damper many spirits. ... It was still a decent turnout and we are grateful for those who braved the rain,” she said. Concessions were provided by Uptown Coffee and Espresso, the Kiwanis Club,

the Elks Lodge, Abby’s Pizza and the Siuslaw Vikings Football Team. The Florence Master Recyclers provided clean-up and dish service. Community members donated memorabilia, gift baskets and certificates for a silent auction open throughout the day. As the daylight faded, volunteers lit luminarias along the track in honor of those who have battled cancer. “This ceremony of light symbolizes the hope that we will find a cure,” a spokesperson said of the event.

“We are in it to win it” was the motto for the day. “We walk as a symbol of our unwavering effort and hope to one day live in a world without cancer. We will win because together we are stronger than cancer,” organizers said. Webber added, “Everything you guys do all year long makes up the world’s largest cancer-fighting movement. All the fundraisers you do all year long add up.”

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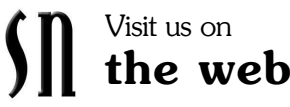


Edward Jones
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Club from 1A

According to Trent, many parallels may be drawn between the help and mentoring he received and the way the Boys and Girls Club reaches young people in need of help. “When I was growing up we were in such a bad spot; we didn’t have money to eat. Leon gave me my dignity back in many ways. He taught me the



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lessons along the way. He taught me the values of hard work. He was my mentor. He took the time to make sure I was OK. He made sure I stayed on track with my schooling.” Trent went on to graduate high school with good grades and then joined the U.S. Marine Corps. After his service, he went on to college and eventually became the chief information officer of a large corporation, before retiring in Florence. The stark reality of the pitfalls students can face, struggling without anywhere to go or anyone to help, also played out in Trent’s immediate family. “My younger brother didn’t have that. He was just as lost as I was. But because nobody cared for him in the same way they cared for me, he went down a different path than I did. He ended up involved in drugs and alcohol, doing some time in prison. He died at age 50. There is not a day goes by that I don’t realize that that could have been me.” Boys and Girls Club is for all students, from elementary through high school, regardless of economic or academic standing. The cost of the membership is \$50 per year and two hours of community service per week. “That could be here, at the Teen Center, helping take care of the grounds, or painting. It could be going over to the elementary program to help younger kids with homework,”

Trent said. Currently the club has 16 students on scholarships, according to Trent. Scholarships provide either full or partial payment of Boys and Girls Club activity expenses for families who can’t afford the cost. Traditionally, scholarship funds have been raised through donations and fundraisers. “For quite some time, the majority of that scholarship money has come from board members’ pockets,” Trent said. “We can’t sustain that. We have to get back to the point where the people in the community see the value of what we bring to the community. That is investing in a child’s future. “We know there are kids that stay at home (alone). We need to have those kids in our after school programs at the elementary, middle and high school. We need to have them here so we can help them with their homework, tutoring them, teaching them leadership skills and basic life skills, like how to manage money.” The Boys and Girls Club has five different sports programs starting this month. In addition, the club will be operating the Teen Center and elementary after-school programs Monday through Friday. “The first hour, whether in the elementary or teen program, is called our ‘Power Hour,’” Trent said, “dedicated to making sure the kids get their homework done. We are looking for volunteers; retired

teachers, anyone who has the ability to help with science, math, social studies or English.” Representatives from the Boys and Girls Club of America will be in Florence to help set up the “Power Hour,” “Project Learn” and “Money Matters” programs. “Kids are really resilient,” Trent said. “When somebody cares about them and makes any effort at all to help them, it is amazing how they respond. That’s what the Boys and Girls Club is really about. We are future builders.” Trent will be in the unique position of being the executive director and serving on the board as well. Because the director serves “at the pleasure” of the board, Trent will be wearing two hats. “I don’t think that will be a problem,” Trent said, “because we are a working board (not an advisory board). I only have one vote. At any point if it looks like there could be a conflict of interest, I would resign from the board until we could afford to pay somebody to do the job. Then I would be glad to go back on the board.” Trent has been functioning as the unofficial director for several months, but now the title is official. “When I was 12 years old, I would have never imagined that I would be here,” he said. “The thing that is so rewarding to me is that now, I can have that same impact on other kids.”



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