

THE MAGIC OF RELAY



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Cancer survivors and caretakers line up for the first lap of Polk County's 24-hour American Cancer Society Relay for Life Polk County, which started on Saturday.

Taking steps to cure cancer

American Cancer Society Relay for Life Polk County took to the track in Dallas last weekend

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Kim Lockett, of Monmouth, thought her singing days were over.

Since childhood, Lockett found a passion in music and singing. She took voice lessons, sang in choir and eventually performed opera.

At 15 she noticed a small bulge on the left side of her throat. Her doctor told her it wasn't serious, but it kept getting bigger.

In October 2009 at age 25, she pushed for a diagnosis.

An ultrasound revealed the left side of her thyroid was filled with fluid. The right side had round mass, which was found to be cancer.

"I just remember a feeling of shock and a sense of complete uncertainty," she said.

Lockett had surgery to remove her thyroid and tissue surrounding it, but there were complications.

The surgery damaged her vocal chords. She needed

speech therapy just to retain her speaking voice.

"Each day I struggle with vocal exhaustion and pain, which has made my ability to sing at full force a long, drawn out battle," she said.

A battle she took a big step in overcoming when she took the stage at Relay for Life Polk County in 2016 to sing the national anthem. She gave a repeat performance at the 2017 event on Saturday.

"I'm not exactly sure what gave me the strength to get back up on the stage in front of you all last year, but I'm pretty sure it had a whole lot to do with this amazing platform called Relay for Life," Lockett said.

She said hearing the stories of people battling cancer and the memories of those lost inspired her.

"You have all empowered me to find my inner strength, my passion again for music," she said.

To see more photos: www.polkio.com.



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Relay for Life participants walk the track at Dallas High School on Saturday morning. Teams set up tents Saturday and had a representative walking the track for the entire 24-hour hours.



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Teams used this year's Disney theme, "The Magic of Relay" to decorate their tents. Team batons were also part of the fun, with participants carrying wands and Aladdin lamps around the track.



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Purple is the designated color for cancer survivors at Relay for Life events. Before the 24-hour event began, teams had raised more than \$26,000 for cancer research.