

RACE FOR THE CURE

MORE THAN 16,000 are expected to converge on Balboa Park November 3 for the Komen San Diego Race for the Cure. This year's event—a coed 5K run and the Frog's Club One Family Mile—marks the 20th anniversary of the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Proceeds will help fund local education, screening and treatment programs for the needy. To enter, log on to www.sdkomen.org or call 858-792-2900.



COMFORT IN A CAP

By Eilene Zimmerman



TEN YEARS AGO, when her husband's boss had cancer, Diana Cavagnaro witnessed the woman's struggle to cope with the hair loss that came with her chemotherapy. Cavagnaro, founder of Designer Millinery, a custom hat shop in downtown San Diego, wanted to use her talents to help ease the physical and psychological pain of that loss.

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“When the hair is gone,” she says, “the scalp becomes extra-sensitive. You need to wear something on your head that is really comfy and breathable.”

Cavagnaro became involved with the Look Good, Feel Better program run by the American Cancer Society, which teaches cancer patients techniques to help restore their appearance and repair their self-image. She offered to help by developing a line of fashionable,

comfortable hats made of cotton Lycra, hemp or fleece—all strong and breathable.

“When my father had cancer,” Cavagnaro says, “I realized I hadn’t done any hats for men, so I put together a hat with fleece. I made the hats for my father, Robert Cousins, and called them Bobcaps. Ironically, the younger generation really likes them, and I also sell them to snowboarders and skiers at local sports shops.”

Cavagnaro has enlisted the help of churches throughout the area, whose volunteers sew hats from her patterns (and under her direction) and donate them to those with cancer. “In the last three years,” she says, “we’ve made probably a thousand hats.”

Cavagnaro got her start in millinery 20 years ago, working in the costume department at the Old Globe Theatre. Now her thriving business makes hats for all occasions—weddings, horse races, fund-raisers, parties. She also teaches in the fashion department at Mesa College and has started filming a series of how-to videos for those who can’t make it to her classes.

And for the last seven years, Cavagnaro has organized the Easter Parade & Hat Contest in the Gaslamp Quarter. The event, which she founded, raises money for kids with cancer and for cancer research at UCSD. For a fee, anyone can come to Cavagnaro’s tables—strewn with a variety of fabrics, ribbons and elaborate decorations—and make a hat.

Last Easter, Cavagnaro also enlisted the help of many outside the millinery world—such as SeaWorld and the Natural History Museum—who rented booths for their own purposes. The results?

“Yesterday,” she says proudly, “we gave a check to UCSD for \$5,000.” ■