

Relay For Life fundraising tops \$54,000

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14 teams have their sights on \$80,000 goal for 2014.

Dawson County's 2014 Relay For Life teams are focused with 20/20 vision on a future without cancer.

Teams already have raised \$54,000 with a goal of \$80,000 for the 20th Annual American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Dawson County on Friday, July 25, at Lake Helen in Gothenburg.

The theme this year is "20/20 A Vision For The Future" with 234 people participating on 14 teams.

"Teams, corporate sponsors and others are stepping up to the challenge of fundraising again this year," said Pam Ackerman, event chairperson. "Each dollar we raise is used to fight cancer. But that is just part of Relay For Life. The real magic is our personal connection to this amazing event."

Relay For Life draws out different emotions for each participant. Cancer survivors celebrate their victory over cancer with gusto and joy. Many participants remember those they have lost to cancer. Others are there to fight back against a disease that takes too many lives and leaves sadness and heartache behind.

"Relay empowers all of us," Ackerman said. "We may not be scientists or doctors, but each one of us right here in Dawson County can have an impact on research, education and serving cancer patients through the American Cancer Society. The dollar you give could buy the test tube that holds a cure."

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Locks of Love has become a traditional Relay activity in Dawson County with many women and men donating long pony tails of hair. This year, the Locks of Love volunteer will be at the park between 4 and 6 p.m. and will offer hair cuts for anyone as a fundraiser.

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

Immediately following the survivor lap will be the Lap of Support for caregivers. All caregivers are invited to participate. Caregivers include family members who have lost loved ones, friends, doctors and nurses, hospice volunteers... anyone who has offered care and concern to someone with cancer.

The Silent Auction from 6 to 9 p.m. will be near the south restroom shelter area at Lake Helen. Some of the items on the auction will be two youth bicycles, wine baskets, stained glass sun catchers, a Tree of Hope painting, jewelry, gift certificates, crafts and much, much more.

Team walking starts around 6:30 p.m. Teams will have at least one team member on the walking path at all times throughout the night. Many teams will be selling food and drinks. Root beer, walking tacos, pulled pork sandwiches, hamburgers and other treats are on the menu.

Activities, games and fundraisers start around 7 p.m. with highlights on the Miss Relay Contest, glow in the dark Frisbees, pinatas and a bouncy house.

The American Cancer Society Mission Booth features a special activity and informational brochures. ACS Advocacy will fill the I Am Hope banner with notes to legislators asking for support to fight cancer.

The Miss Relay contest features men of all ages willing to put on a dress, makeup and wigs to collect donations. The 2015 Miss Relay will be crowned around 8:45 p.m.

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The Luminaria Ceremony starts at dusk with a special treat from the Gothenburg Dance Centre and the popular slide show of names and photos that put a face to cancer. The 1,500 or more luminaria candles will be lit to illuminate the way for Relay walkers throughout the night.

As midnight approaches, a Light Up The Night bike ride and Lip Dub videos on the big screen are scheduled. Also, a scavenger hunt and voting for Spirit Award will be conducted.

Quiet time starts at 2 a.m. Participants continue walking until dawn. A closing ceremony and last lap for 2014 officially begins the 2015 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 group of captains and team members is one of the best around. Together, we can finish the fight!”