

News

Dedicated Duall named Relay Grand Marshal

Monday, March 23, 2009 7:52 AM EDT

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POTTSTOWN — Lesley Duall is so dedicated to continuing the fight against cancer she postponed a move to Virginia after being named the Grand Marshal of the 2009 Relay for Life.

"I was thinking I was going to go into semi-retirement with Relay because we were thinking we were going to make the move to Virginia to be closer to the families," Duall said of the proposed relocation that would have put her closer to her children and grandchildren.

"Diane Nester (Relay chairperson) had called and said 'Beckie (Keller, Relay co-chairperson) and I had something to ask you. Would you be our Grand Marshal?'"

"Honestly, my first thought was 'Oh gosh, another commitment,'" Duall said. "But I found myself saying, 'Oh yes, of course I will.'"

For Duall, Relay is important because the effort gives others the hope to keep fighting a disease she was fortunate enough to beat.

A cancer diagnosis never comes at a good time, but for Duall, it came at one of the most difficult times in her life.

Her mother had just passed away in her native England after a long battle with a brain tumor.

"Having just lost my mother, nursing her through the last six month of her life was very painful for me," Duall said. "Not being able to make it right, up until that point I had been a fix-it person, very pragmatic. This I couldn't fix and it was very, very painful for me."

"Coming home ... I certainly wasn't even thinking about myself and my own health," Duall said.

When Duall returned to the U.S. after caring for her mother, she realized she'd missed her annual mammogram and checkup. She brushed it off at first, dismissing the missed appointment as a priority after all she'd been through. But she scheduled an appointment after thinking of a friend who'd lost her battle with breast cancer.

The checkup would ultimately save her life. The doctor discovered a lump that was ultimately diagnosed as ovarian cancer. At stage one, grade three, the prognosis was good because the cancer was discovered early.

"Had I gone a year later, I wouldn't be telling my story," she said. "I owe my life to my oncologist and my

gynecologist," Duall said.

Ovarian cancer, according to the American Cancer Society, ranks fifth in the causes of cancer death in women, accounting for more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system.

Although she's remains cancer free, Duall feels a tremendous responsibility to continue fighting against the disease for all the others who are diagnosed and fighting for their lives.

She encourages everyone to join her at the 2009 Relay for Life of Pottstown being held May 30 to 31 at Pottsgrove High School and to continue to support the Relay for Life and the ACS as they fight to eradicate cancer.

"This is one thing I'm passionate about," she said.

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