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Pottstown, Pennsylvania

Pottstown Relay for Life celebrates \$1M victory

Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps, down new roads, armed with nothing but their own vision. — Ayn Rand

By Brandie Kessler
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LOWER POTTS GROVE — Doing what only a handful of others have done, the American Cancer Society Relay for Life of Pottstown raised \$1 million during its 10th anniversary year. As a way to celebrate their victory, relay organizers and volunteers gathered with community members at Pottsgrove High School Friday night.

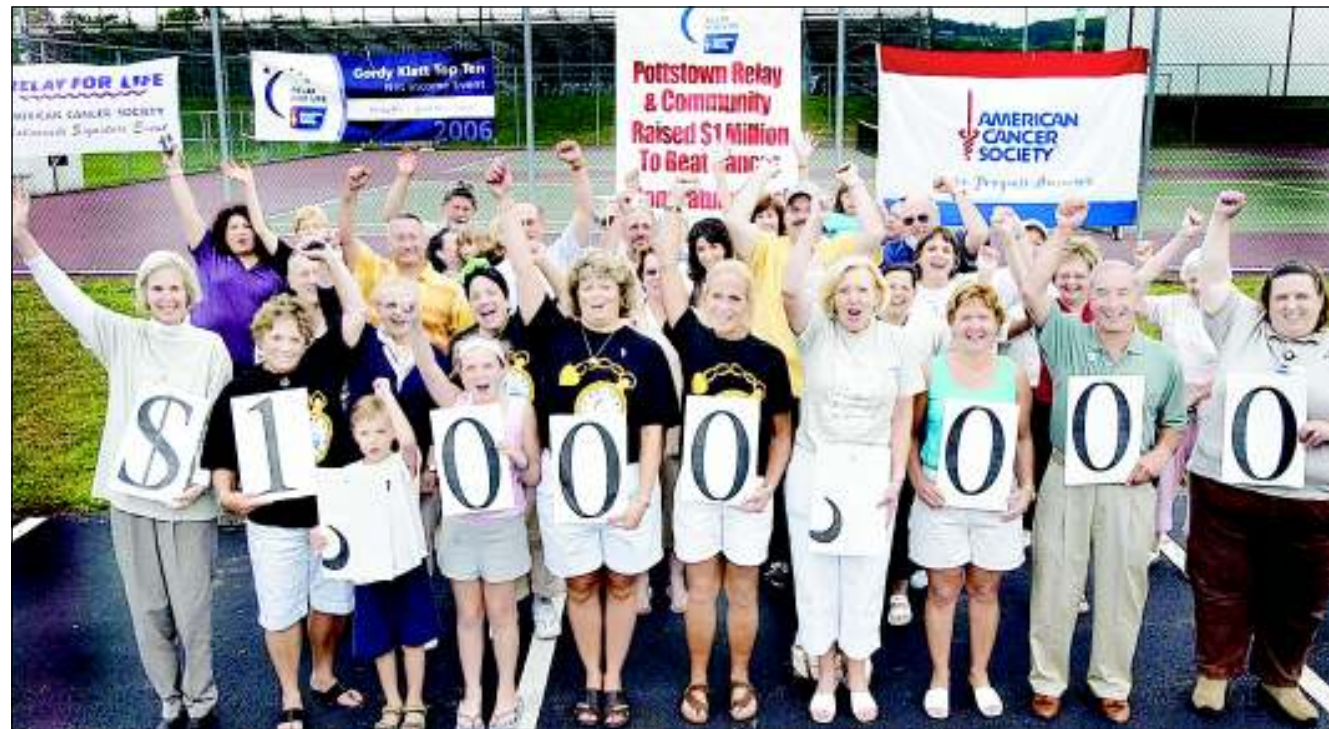
Although a hot air balloon launch from the high school was cancelled be-

cause of potential inclement weather, the banner which read “Pottstown Relay and Community raised \$1 Million to Beat Cancer- Congratulations!” that would have hung from the balloon was displayed.

“At 3 p.m. (the hot air balloon launch) was on, but at 4 o’clock (the US Hot Air Balloon Team, owned and operated by Stan Hess of St. Peters) checked in with the National Weather Service and there was going to be storms,” Relay Chairperson JoAnn McKiernan explained. “So we have the banner that would have been hung from the balloon here.”

McKiernan said the plan is to allow local organizations and businesses that

(See RELAY RECORD on A3)



John Strickler/The Mercury

Relay for Life organizers and volunteers celebrate a record \$1 million raised outside Pottsgrove High School.

Pottstown Relay for Life celebrates \$1M victory

(RELAY RECORD from A1)

supported Relay to host the banner over the next several weeks. Any business or organization interested in hosting and displaying the banner should call the Relay hotline at 610-327-6900 and leave a message with their information.

McKiernan and several other dedicated volunteers spoke to the crowd of about 30 people who came out Friday despite the gray skies, thanking them for their efforts to make the Relay in Pottstown stand out.

Deb Kurtz, an oncology nurse who helped bring Relay to Pottstown, recalled how the event has grown over the years and marveled at how successful they have been.

"It just goes to show what a small group of people can do," Kurtz said. Relay "just snowballed into this creation."

Peggy Neese, also an oncology nurse, said the money that is raised is really doing things in the community and what she sees everyday is proof of that. She said that she sees people every day who are living longer and more comfortably because of the medicine and technology that is provided by the ACS and money that is raised by programs like the Relay for Life.

In Pottstown, cancer patients are helped every day by new medicines, but also by programs like Look Good, Feel Better and Road to Recovery, which are funded by the ACS.

"My heart goes over the top when I think that we're literally giving the ACS \$1 million," McKiernan said.

ACS staff member Gina Bitetti was thrilled that another Relay made it to the \$1 million mark.

"To be able to say we have another

Relay in Pennsylvania, that we have a Relay in Southeastern Pennsylvania (that's reached \$1 million) is just amazing," Bitetti said.

Maddi DeGenaro, a community liaison for the ACS, said Pottstown has made a habit of setting goals and exceeding expectations.

"They've done it once again, better and best," DeGenaro said.

Therese Kennel of Sanatoga, who has supported Relay and is considering joining a team next year, came out to the celebration after reading about it in *The Mercury*.

"I read the paper every day," Kennel said. "I just couldn't believe they could raise \$1 million," Kennel said. "I came here because I'm happy for everyone."

Kennel explained that her life, while not through personal experiences, has been touched by cancer.

"I have a couple of people I know who died of cancer. My brother-in-law, he died of liver cancer. My aunt, my would-be mother-in-law (both died of cancer).

Kennel followed Relay's progress and the stories of individuals who were touched by cancer in *The Mercury*, and wanting to celebrate reaching the \$1 million goal with the people she had read about for so long, she came out to Pottsgrove High School.

"I just thought it was neat to come out here and celebrate with the people who have endured (cancer) - the survivors."

With only a handful of Relays in the world reaching the \$1 million milestone, the ACS Relay for Life of Pottstown will find out where it ranks on the world scale in the first few weeks of September. For more information on the ACS Relay for Life of Pottstown visit www.pottstownrelay-forlife.com.