

Quad-City Times

Woman rides to raise funds for breast cancer research

By Steven Martens | Thursday, September 21, 2006 |



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO Breast cancer survivor Joan Archer of Clinton, Iowa, will be one of 11 breast cancer survivors taking part in Amazon Heart Thunder, a week-long motorcycle ride from Los Angeles to San Francisco that begins Saturday.

CLINTON, Iowa — Joan Archer of Clinton was reading a Web site for breast cancer survivors when she came across a way that was right up her alley to raise money and awareness of the disease she had battled.

Archer, 45, will be one of 11 breast cancer survivors taking part in Amazon Heart Thunder, a week-long motorcycle ride from Los Angeles to San Francisco.

She learned of the ride last year while reading blog posts at www.breastcancer.org. She was too late to enter last year's ride, but waited eagerly to send in her application for this year's ride, which begins Saturday.

Participants are asked to try to raise about \$5,000 in donations. Archer said while some participants hold fundraisers, she sent letters to her friends and family and talked to local businesses to raise money.

"I've noticed that the people who have been the strongest supporters other than the businesses are those who have been personally affected," she said.

When she was diagnosed with breast cancer in March 2004, Archer said her sister-in-law also was battling the disease, as have neighbors and others she knows.

"It just seems like there is so much of it," she said.

Archer took her first motorcycle ride when she borrowed a friend's cycle in high school and has been riding her own Harley-Davidson for eight years with her husband, Jeff. Archer said she was excited to learn that Harley-Davidson is loaning the ride participants Dyna Low Rider model motorcycles for the ride.

Harley-Davidson also provides motorcycles for rides in England and Australia, said Megan Dwyer of San Jose, Calif., co-founder of Amazon Heart.

Dwyer said she and fellow breast cancer survivor Meredith Campbell founded the organization a few years ago because they found many breast cancer survivor peer support groups to be made up of women who were significantly older than they were. Dwyer was diagnosed at age 35.

The organization they formed offers a variety of experiences to breast cancer survivors designed to help them find peer support and aid others. Other Amazon Heart projects have included building homes for the needy in Sri Lanka and a biking and hiking trip through New Zealand.

"We just made it up," Dwyer said.

Archer said she hopes participating in the ride will raise awareness of breast cancer and raising money will lead to developments that will benefit younger generations, including her 15-year-old daughter, Kayla.

"I'm hoping by the time my daughter is older, they will have something better for her," she said. "Hopefully, she'll never have to go through all that."

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