

In their honor

Loved ones remembered through fundraisers

By Kristy Eckert | THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

They do it for the people they love — to honor them, to contribute in their name, to turn grief into hope. They do it with passion and elbow grease, sometimes with hearts still aching. And they do it often. Scores of central Ohioans organize fundraisers in memory of folks they've cherished and lost.

From community golf outings to music-infused footraces, such efforts not only support a wide range of causes but also soothe the sting for survivors.

"What happens is the story of their loved one gets to be retold," said Janette McDonald, a psychology professor at Capital University in Bexley who specializes in death, dying and bereavement.

"So the retelling of the story, or the sharing of the story of the person who has passed on, sort of lets the person's family and friends know that this person's life had significance."

On Sunday, Maren Roth will herald her father's story through the third annual Jack Roth Rock n' Run in Bexley.

Planning the race, she said, helped her overcome feelings of powerlessness after his death in 2004.

"It helps give you a voice, and it helps give your tragedy a voice," she said. "And I think, anytime you're able to shed light on a tragedy, it's inevitably going to help somebody else."

With that thought in mind, *The Dispatch* highlights the personal stories behind the Roth race and a sampling of other grass-roots fundraisers.



Ben Montgomery

Honoree: Ben Montgomery, a Johnstown native and avid golfer who died of brain cancer in April 2008 at 27

Event: golf outing and dinner

Date: August 31, 2009

Where: York Golf Club, Columbus

Cost: \$100 for golf, lunch, and dinner, \$20 for dinner only

Benefits: research on pediatric brain tumors at Nationwide Children's Hospital

More information: Rudy Milosevich at 614-657-6299 or rudymilo@driversforesurvivors.org

Ben was a vibrant, athletic 10-year-old when a seizure felled him on the basketball court of a playground.

A brain tumor was detected, and he underwent surgery and radiation.

Within two months, using a special helmet that fit inside his cap, the Johnstown boy was playing baseball — and even made the all-star team.

For 10 years, the cancer remained at bay.

When it returned, though, it proved relentless.

Despite his medical setbacks, Montgomery graduated from Wilmington College and began work at a country club.

He wanted to help other brain-cancer patients, so he planned the first Drivers Fore Survivors golf outing even while

still having chemotherapy in the fall of 2006.

A year later, he organized a second successful outing before undergoing a fifth brain operation.

Then a new tumor grew.

Early this year, he faced a sixth surgery. On April 12, he lost the fight.

Yet the fundraiser he started endures, with his family and friends planning to host the 2008 installment in September.

"He wanted this to be his legacy," said Nancy Fuchik, his aunt. "He was very positive and was convinced he was going to beat it."

"But if he couldn't, he definitely wanted to leave something for others who would be fighting a similar battle."