

Events Raise Awareness, Funds for “Silent Disease”

By Jennifer Wake

At age 43, when Lafayette business owner Wendy Tamis began to have shooting abdominal pains that left her doubled over, she knew something was wrong. But when several months passed without relief and her fingertips became numb, the tips turning black, she really got scared. A professional harpist, she could no longer play and had no answers as to why.

More than six months after her initial symptoms began and five doctors later, she was finally diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the emergency room.

Once considered a “silent disease,” researchers are now finding a cluster of symptoms to watch for that could be the early stages of the cancer, most common of which are bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly and feeling a frequent or urgent need to urinate. Loss of blood flow to the fingers, as Tamis experienced, is a much rarer symptom.

Now able to play the harp again, and more than five years after her diagnosis, Tamis and her husband Scott Hampton are planning their fourth annual “Time to Celebrate Life” event – which encompasses an evening of great food, live music, and prizes held at the couple’s business, Clocks, Etc., in La Fiesta Square on Oct. 4 from 5 to 8 p.m., to benefit the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition (NOCC).

“We thought, ‘Maybe we can do something to make people more aware of ovarian cancer,’” said Hampton. “We sat down with our friend Julie Olson, who also had ovarian cancer, and her husband, and brainstormed. A harpist volunteered to play at our first event, a band at the second. We give a grandfather clock away as a

grand prize each year. It’s something we can do.”

Matt Sharp, who owns Sharp Bicycle in La Fiesta Square with wife, Sally, has a close relationship with Wendy and Scott, and says Tamis’ battle with ovarian cancer struck a chord. Three years ago, Sally’s sister lost her battle to ovarian cancer. “We’ve seen first hand that this doesn’t happen to ‘other people’ – it happens very close to home. We hear these stories of people who say that they had symptoms and didn’t respond to them; it’s one of those things you want to take care of.”

In addition to the October event, this year Tamis and Hampton are partnering with Oakwood Athletic Club, which will be hosting “Time to Celebrate Life, A Day of Fitness with the Pros!” on Saturday, Sept. 29 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the club. A variety of active morning classes and afternoon mind/body classes will be open to the public with a minimum \$25 donation, with all proceeds benefiting NOCC.

The Oakwood event includes prizes, guest instructors, snacks and a light lunch from noon to 1 p.m. for participants, with a small silent auction from 8 a.m. to 1p.m. (which includes a \$1,000 necklace). One of the guest instructors is Jennifer Sage from Vail, Colo., who will lead two SPIN classes. Registration for these classes will begin Sept. 5.

Tamis hopes both events will build awareness of the disease and its symptoms. “I was always really aware of breast cancer because there’s so much out there about prevention and screening,” she said. “There are no screening tests for ovarian cancer. Doctors don’t even seem to know the symptoms.”



Owners Wendy Tamis and Scott Hampton stand amongst their many chiming wares at Clocks, Etc. in Lafayette's La Fiesta Square Photo by Jennifer Wake

Since the initial event, Tamis and Hampton have raised more than \$20,000 for ovarian cancer research. On the Oct. 4 event, adjacent businesses like Sharp Bicycle and Design Within Reach will help out by welcoming overflow guests into their stores.

Raffle tickets will be sold at Clocks, Etc. and Oakwood. In addition to the Howard Miller grandfather clock grand prize, silent auction prizes will include: a night at a studio apartment for two, overlooking Ghirardelli Square; a deluxe room at Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa; and a magnum of HRM Rex Goliath California Cabernet Sauvignon wine.

For raffle tickets and information, call (925) 284-4720.



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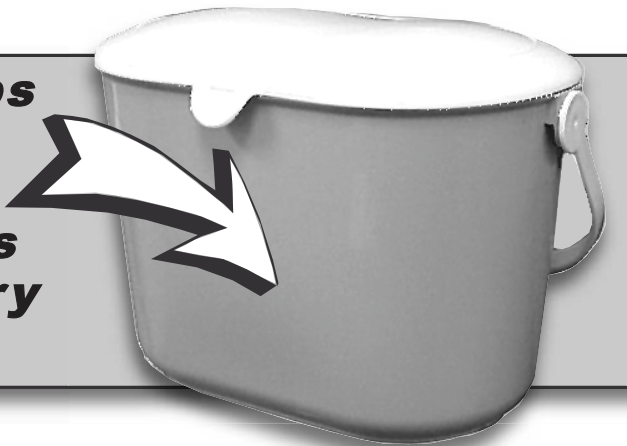
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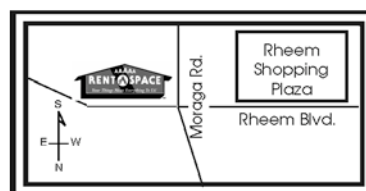
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