

Party raises funds, awareness

Impromptu gathering turns into an annual fundraising event.

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What began as an impromptu fund-raising idea has become an annual gathering, which has raised close to \$7,000 for breast cancer patients and is now known as the Pay It Forward Party.

When Jill Wolford, a mother of two, was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 1999, nobody could believe it. "I had just had a baby," she said.

Wolford along with friends and family, has participated in the Race for the Cure since 1999. The race was followed by brunch one year and a party the next. The party initiated what is now an annual fundraiser — held Saturday, June 8 — led by Wolford, who has been cancer-free since September 2001.

"Last year we got a little bit savvy," Wolford said. "We told everyone who came to put what they would pay for beer and a

burger into a basket."

The dollars quickly added up, and they were able to raise about \$750, which was given to a single mother to pay for part of her medical bills.

"I know how much support you need emotionally," said Melissa Faris, who overcame her battle with breast cancer. "We wanted to do whatever we could to alleviate the stress put on these people."

The money raised will help with the financial stress and allow patients to focus on their emotional well being.

"Our ultimate goal is to raise as much money as possible to donate to patients, who can't afford treatment," said Sheri Seiferheld, who assisted in fund raising.

Wolford says they hope to sponsor many breast-cancer patients this year due to an increased amount of funding.

The guest list increased to 150 people, who helped raise \$6,325 for breast-cancer patients. "This is people giving anonymously to help someone in need," Wolford said. "It is really getting contagious. People can't give enough."

Door prizes were used as a small incentive to encourage generosity. A signed Hurricanes jersey, plane tickets and other raffle items, including 35 door prizes, were donated. "People were donating things right and left," Wolford said.

Wolford hopes the epidemic of giving will lead to even more participation. "Next year we hope to double the amount of money donated," she said.

Wolford contends there would have been more people present at the Pay It Forward Party if it had not been up against the Hurricanes game.

"I want everyone to bring a friend next year, so it will double in size," Faris said.

Wolford and others hope to see Pay It Forward develop into a non-profit organization to encourage more people to contribute to the cause.

"It is great to see good people doing good for other people," Wolford said.

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