

For Immediate Release

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American Cancer Society Announces Chatham County - #1 In Nation
Entire County invited to Celebration on Sunday!

Raleigh, NC -- (October 21, 2005) – The Pittsboro & West Chatham Relay For Life events were recently recognized with one of the American Cancer Society's most prestigious National Awards. With more than 4,300 Relay for Life events held in the United States in 2005, Chatham County ranked #1 in the Nation for per capita money raised in a population of 50,000-59,999.

Carol Esau, Ann McDaniel, Terrie McLaurin & Claire Wilson, Committee Chairs lead the Relays of Chatham County which raised over \$405,000 in 2005. More than 340 survivors participated in the opening lap of these events and 89 teams participated.

“This should be a proud moment for everyone in the county”, said Terrie McLaurin, West Chatham Co-Chair. “It shows the commitment from our community in the fight against cancer”.

“It’s hard to find someone in our county who has not participated in one of the Relays either by walking, attending a fundraiser, or making a donation”, said Carol Esau, Pittsboro Relay Co-Chair. “We want everyone to celebrate this accomplishment with us. The entire county is invited to a Celebration at the Pitt Stop Café Banquet Room on Sunday, October 30th from 2 – 5 pm. It’s a floating reception so folks should drop in when possible to enjoy some refreshments and fellowship.”

The West Chatham Relay for Life was held at Jordan Matthews High School in Siler City, NC on Friday, May 6th & Saturday, May 7th raising a grand total of \$161,758.68. Thirty-nine teams and over 500 registered team members participated. Together the top three West Chatham teams raised over \$61,000.00.

The top ten teams were Gold Kist, Cancer Support Group, Fields Body Shop, Bethany Baptist Church, Brush Creek Baptist Church, Chatham Hospital, The Power of One, Jordan Matthews & Friends, Lambert Chapel Church and Brady & Friends.

West Chatham's event began with a beautiful reception for the 190 survivors in attendance. Opening ceremonies were led by the torch run thru town with our guest speaker, Rosemary Plybon with WFMY News2, lighting the cauldron on the field. Our 190 survivors led the first lap with friends and family joining in on the second lap.

At 9:00 p.m. the stadium lights were dimmed as walking continued in the glow of 1262 luminaries placed in honor and in memory of loved ones.

There was non-stop entertainment until midnight. "These groups are professionals who have given their time and talent to help West Chatham Relay for Life "Celebrate Life" by honoring the survivors at this event and raise money for the fight against cancer", said McLauren.

The sponsors enable West Chatham to have their event each May with very little expense. The donation of their expertise such as electrical set-up, the sound and stage, tents, etc. is all donated. The sponsors contributed over \$24,200.00.

The West Chatham teams were very creative and entertaining with their fundraising ideas. West Chatham's top team, Gold Kist worked many hard long hours. Different departments offered lunch to employees throughout their fundraising season. One of their events was a chicken-drop contest. Several of the ladies competed for the title of Ms. Gold Kist. Three of these ladies raised over \$1000.00 each qualifying them for the Grand Relay Club. Ms. Gold Kist was crowned at still another fundraiser, their annual dance.

The Cancer support Group, West Chatham's number two team, was born from the American Cancer Society's sponsored Reach to Recovery program in Chatham County. Their main fundraising effort was the sale of their third published cookbook. The recipes were submitted in honor or memory of a loved one with cancer.

Fields Body Shop, West Chatham's number three team, put all their friends and family to work for their team. They held car washes, bake sales, raffles, etc. At the event, they kept a long line of people waiting for their marinated chicken-on-a-stick. "You just followed your nose to their site", McLaurin said. They dedicated their team to a close friend who had lost his battle with cancer this year. Their site was set up like a ranch because of his love for horses.

The rest of the teams took no back seat to the top three. Lambert Chapel had their cabbage, pintos and cornbread again this year. Lazar Industries had a Mardi Gras parade and the children could make their own mask at their site. Brush Creek was cutting hair at their tent site on that very windy Friday night of the event. The ladies of their church had a luncheon and silent auction. The men did not want to be outdone so they came up with a Supper and musical presentation by Melody Hadley and her brother Rick along with Levi Austin.

The Chatham Hospital had a gigantic yard sale and book sale pre-events. At the Relay, they had delicious funnel cakes. The hospital team also had a rock-climbing wall.

“These and other fun fundraisers go on year round. Our event has gotten bigger and better each year. Imagine the pleasure we feel when we hear discussions about the next year before the current one has ended”, McLaurin said.

Pittsboro’s fourth annual Relay for Life was held at Northwood High School in Pittsboro on Friday, May 13th and Saturday, May 14th, 2005 with 50 teams and over 900 registered participants plus countless community members who came out to the Relay. These teams fundraise all year including: Jewelry parties, spaghetti suppers, ham and egg suppers/breakfasts, fish fries, bingo, Pampered Chef parties, candle sales, handmade chocolates, beautiful homemade jewelry, cake walks, handmade quilts, silent auctions and even a great Keith Henderson concert.

Thirty three of Pittsboro Relay For Life’s teams were All Star teams this year with 5 of them achieving Premiere level (\$700 + per team member). Our top team, Bells Angels, raised \$21,193 with our 2nd place team Merritt’s on the Move raising over \$10K.

Pittsboro had some firsts that were very successful; their first Motorcycle Poker Run in September '04 raised over \$5K. Over 150 bikers from 37 different NC towns participated in the 100 mile ride through Chatham County. Another first was Pittsboro’s Miss Relay Pageant. It was an enormous hit on Relay Friday night. Eight lovely participants collected over \$8500.

The first ever Relay Idol competition showed some excellent Chatham County talent and brought in an additional \$2000 for the fight against cancer.

An elegant and touching Celebration Dinner honored Pittsboro’s survivors at the Fearington Barn in April. 150 survivors and their guests attended the wonderful event.

More than 150 survivors walked in the opening lap at Pittsboro’s event. Survivors then lined up in the middle of the field in a ribbon formation and pictures were taken by a local pilot who flew over the event.

1200 breathtaking luminaries lined the Relay track astounding the hearts of all who participated as well as the word “HOPE” spelled out in luminaries on the bleachers. Bynum UMC has sponsored the Hope Luminary each of the four years of the event.

A torch run from the Chatham County Courthouse to Northwood High School kicked off the 4th annual Relay. The committee carried the torch around the track and lit the cauldron in memory of their friend and fellow committee member, Bonita Cumbie, who was tragically killed in March by a drunk driver. Bonita's family members joined the committee in the memory lap. Students from Horton Middle School walked a special lap in memory of James Arthurs who lost his battle with cancer the month before the relay. Mr. Arthurs was a beloved teacher and coach at Horton for almost 30 years.

There were activities and entertainment for the whole family throughout the event. Almost every team did some type of fundraiser onsite. These included huge inflatables for the children, Games, jail-a-thon, dunking booth, silent auctions, BBQ chicken, country ham biscuits, fish sandwiches and ice cream.

Pittsboro had raised over \$100K before the event started on May 13th. The community goal in Pittsboro was \$205K in 2005. They surpassed that goal by raising \$245K!!

Relay For Life is a fun-filled, overnight event that mobilizes communities throughout the country to celebrate survivors, remember loved ones and raise money for the fight against cancer. Teams of eight to 15 members gather with tents and sleeping bags to participate in the largest fundraising event in the nation.

"The funds raised through Relay For Life events like the one in Chatham County enable the American Cancer Society to continue our investment in the fight against cancer through research, education, advocacy and patient services," said Charlotte King, Community Manager of the Society's South Atlantic Division. "Thanks to the generosity of our volunteers and donors, the money raised by Relay For Life participants goes directly to the American Cancer Society's lifesaving programs."

Information about how to form a team or become involved in Relay For Life is available from the American Cancer Society at 919.342.6213 or 888.329.0335.

The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. For information about cancer call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 1-800-ACS-2345 or log on to www.cancer.org.

Thank You Chatham County! Pittsboro and West Chatham Relay for Life are pleased and proud to call Chatham County home.