

## One world, one hope

"One World, One Hope." That's the message and theme for Grand Island's 13th annual Relay For Life of the American Cancer Society this year. Committee members of Relay For Life are already hard at work for this year's fundraiser, aimed at seeing a world without cancer.

The official Relay For Life Kickoff Celebration will be held at Veronica Connor Middle School's cafeteria at 7 p.m. on Jan. 14. This night will wrap up the successful 2014 "Rock Out Cancer" theme, in which there was music memorabilia everywhere and the park rocked the night away with 35 teams, over 100 survivors and over 1,000 attendees.

The kickoff party will also officially kick off the "One World, One Hope" theme aimed at showcasing various cultures that make up our unique world.

On May 30, 2015, Relay For Life will return to Veterans Park once again to raise money for cancer research, prevention and awareness. Participants of all ages, cultures and backgrounds join together to spend the night walking a track to wipe out cancer. Taking turns, team members continually walk against a disease that never sleeps. The evening mixes celebration with remembrance and courage while enjoying various performances, treats and games. Doors will open at 4 p.m., with the traditional survivor lap following the opening ceremony at 6 p.m. that evening.

Last year, I was honored to serve as the honorary survivor. I have spent my life fighting back against a difficult disease that attempts to break its hosts just as much mentally as physically. This November, I celebrated the 20-year anniversary since my last cancer treatment. I spoke from my heart at Relay last year when I said that battling cancer is

not something that can be done alone. It requires an army of friends, family and doctors.

Cancer can occur to anyone, anywhere, at any time regardless of age, race or sex. It is appropriate this year, then, that we as a committee have chosen the 2015 theme to be "One World, One Hope." The American Cancer Society reports that 20 countries each year hold a Relay event.

"The world theme I think encompasses all of our hopes; that cancer will be defeated and we work not only as a community but as a world," said Becky Sommer-Stufkosky, who returns for a third year as co-chair of the Grand Island Relay Committee. "For cancer is so big and spreads so far. Together through our mission, we reach all lands."

Though we speak different languages, have various beliefs, cultures and backgrounds, the unity that we share is crystal clear. Friends and family mean everything to us. Cancer is a universal wedge that tries to split those bonds apart, yet in many cases forges and strengthens new bonds. This holiday season, be thankful for not only the roof over your head and food at your table, but for the family and friends that you have to share them with.

Registration is currently open and donations have are being collected. By visiting [www.relayforlife.org/grandislandny](http://www.relayforlife.org/grandislandny), you can find out how to donate, sign up or assist a participant with their fundraiser efforts.

On behalf of the Relay For Life committee, we thank you for your support over the years and look forward to celebrating another successful Relay on Saturday, May 30. Happy holidays from all of us!

Casey Dahlstrom  
Publicity Coordinator  
Grand Island Relay For Life

## Loneliness found in many of those with disabilities

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dyslexia, severe arthritis, renal failure, chronic illness, multiple sclerosis, an amputation, schizophrenia, lupus, traumatic brain injury, deafness, blindness, cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome, an intellectual disability, an ostomy, cleft lip or palate, epilepsy, glaucoma, spina bifida, paralysis, fetal alcohol syndrome, stroke, muscular dystrophy or hundreds of other disabling conditions or anyone with a significantly impaired ability to walk, talk, eat, sleep, drive or work?

Recently, I searched online for academic research to back up the claim people with disabilities experience more loneliness year-round - not just during the holidays - and actually found too much information to fit into

any one column. Various researchers have found higher levels of loneliness, in particular, in children with learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities, seniors with disabilities, children with intellectual disabilities, seniors with cerebral palsy, adolescents with developmental disabilities, boys with autism and in many other populations.

So people with disabilities, in general, experience more loneliness than the rest of the population, sometimes because of being less verbal or unable to physically get out to meet others or just plain due to having fewer social skills.

Go make a holiday friend today. Contact Daniel J. Vance at [danieljvance.com](mailto:danieljvance.com). (This column is sponsored by Blue Valley Sod and Palmer Bus Service.)



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