

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Masses Fill C'std Town To Make 'Strides Against Breast Cancer'

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Cynthia Graham **October 19, 2014**



A large crowd of revelers gathered at Basin Triangle, at the gas station there, adjacent to Moravian Church. Some donned tutus, others decorative hats. Most people--men, women and children--wore pink. One reveler could be seen weaving through the crowd with a pink 'superwoman' cape draped across her shoulders. Then, to signal the official beginning of the event, the sweet and infectious quelbe sounds of Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights broke through the early evening calm.

Although it certainly felt that way, the scene was not that of a pre-Crucian Christmas Festival tramp through downtown Christiansted on a Saturday night; rather, it was one where hundreds of St. Croix residents took to the streets in support of The American



Cancer" annual awareness and

A symbol of hope at the C'std wharf for

breast cancer survivors at Saturday night's "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walk.

Now in its third year, the event is the culmination of the local arm of the Cancer Society's efforts to ensure women get their annual breast exams, according to Vivian Furet, chairperson. She said awareness and fundraising efforts began early in October.

"We started off by having a tea party at the Palms, which was really successful and from there, every Wednesday and Friday, we go to Sunny Isle to try to solicit help for these patients," Furet explained, adding "because everyday we have someone coming into the office for help--whether it's breast cancer, colon cancer...some sort of cancer, there's always someone coming into the office."

And, Furet said her and her team's effort is a labor of love, as no one is receiving compensation for the work and all of the Cancer Society's funding comes strictly from charitable donations and fundraisers.

"We are not getting monies from anywhere," she said, "the volunteers help to raise the money and that's the only way we get money to help these patients."

Many elected officials and those vying for political office in the upcoming November 4 General Election joined the mass of people that marched down main street Christiansted with Stanley's rhythmic fife (flute), triangle, pipes, guiro and drums leading the way.

"I've always been very supportive of this event. Ever since I came back home, I have participated, as you can see I really participate," Senator Sammuel Sanes said, motioning to the decorative pink bra he donned atop his white, button down shirt. Like Sanes, many in the crowd wore similar symbols in support of the effort.

"The unfortunate part about it is a good friend of mine, a high school friend, passed away a couple of years ago and I have a friend now, who is in Florida, getting medical treatment for breast cancer, so this is very important to me," the senator said.

With that he encouraged women to get screened.

"Checkups, checkups, checkups, take advantage of it," Sanes urged, "even if you haven't thought about it, go get a check up."

Senator Terrance "Positive" Nelson was also on hand to show his support.



"I found it important to be out here tonight because I am fully supportive of women and the breast cancer fight, altogether," he said.

Like Sanes, Nelson encouraged the community to be sensitive to the issue and women to get screened.

"You know, we're a culture that don't (sic) like to go to the doctor, but just get checked so that you could sort of mitigate the challenges that come along with [breast cancer]," Nelson said. "It's something that we're going to have to continue to fight, and make up your mind to don't wait to die, but live every day."



Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights

led hundreds of supporters through downtown C'std in Saturday night's "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walk.

Other senators in the crowd included Alicia "Chucky" Hansen, Nereida "Nellie" O'reilly and Kenneth Gittens. Senate hopefuls Norvelle Francis and Miguel Quinones were also spotted.

As the big truck carrying the band reached the Christiansted wharf, the legendary musicians strummed their last few notes that garnered loud cheers from the crowd. But, the night wasn't over. There, on the lush green grass surrounding Fort Christiansvaern, under the stars, a short ceremony was held to recognize survivors and the event's key players.

Cancer survivor, Veronique Fedee, shared some of her story with the *VI Consortium*.

"I was diagnosed with a stage 2 carcinoma in October 2012," she began. "I've been in treatment and I'm doing very great right now," she said.

She went on to urge other women to get screened.

"I am encouraging all the young people to have their mammogram done, so that in that way they can see if there is any danger of breast cancer, especially if you know you have it in your family," Fedee said, noting that her daughter is also a survivor of the disease.

"If you don't have it in your family, just do it," she continued, "if you have it in your family, continue doing it every six months, so in that way you can catch it in time, instead of

waiting for it to reach to a stage 4."

With that, the beaming Fedee said she was happy to be alive.

"Everyday sometimes it is a struggle, but it's great to be alive," she said.

And, in order to save many more women's lives, Dr. Angelo Galiber, director of diagnostic imaging services at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, in a brief statement to the crowd, said cancer treatments are becoming more advanced.

"What we have discovered is that this disease is actually many diseases and now we are in the stages where we are doing individualized treatment, and that's where we're finding that we can make a big difference," he said.

Galiber also pushed the importance of breast cancer awareness.



Sen. Samuel Sanes and friend show their support at Saturday night's "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walk in C'std.

"The whole concept of tonight is that we have to increase awareness," he said, "and increasing awareness is, in part, education. So, the education of the whole public, because breast cancer is a disease that affects all of us."

Furet concluded by saying, "Please don't be afraid, go and get your mammogram done."

For more information, contact the local office of the American Cancer Society at (340) 778-2882 or visit the organization's website [here](#).