

'With great dignity and grace'

Anne's Army keeps memory of Anne Wolf close to their hearts

By **PAUL LOCHER**
Staff Writer

ORRVILLE — A year and a quarter after 29-year-old Anne Wolf died of breast cancer, her sister remembers her as fighting what would inevitably be a losing battle "with great dignity and grace."

Amy Lahmers of Columbus talked about the death of her sister in January 2010, and the impact it had on other members of the family who have since formed a tax-exempt charitable foundation to raise money for breast cancer research.

Lahmers said Wolf, who lived on York Road in Baughman Township with her husband of nearly eight years, Josh, her 3-year-old daughter, Grace, and newborn son A.J., "was someone who always lived a very healthy lifestyle."

Anne, who was employed by the J.M. Smucker Co. in its customer service department, delivered the couple's second child in September 2009.

But Lahmers said just a couple days after Anne gave birth, doctors noted symptoms that she described as "concerning."

Shortly thereafter she was diagnosed with stage IV triple negative breast cancer, so named because it spread quickly to her lymph nodes, liver and bones. Doctors determined the cancer had started during her pregnancy.

"It's the worst kind of breast cancer and the hardest kind to treat," said Lahmers, "because it is extremely aggressive, it recurs and it metastasizes." She said 15 percent of breast cancer patients are diagnosed with the triple negative type and



Submitted photo

Anne Wolf is shown with her daughter, Grace, shortly before Wolf's death in January 2010 from stage IV triple negative breast cancer. A benefit 5k run for cancer research will be held by Anne's Army at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center on June 25.

the cancer is almost invariably "devastating."

Despite the grim diagnosis, Lahmers said her sister kept a positive outlook and faced the uphill battle head-on.

Lahmers said Anne asked for an "army" of people to help with prayers and well wishes to get her through the fight. As a result, a group that bills itself as "Anne's Army" was recruited, and she and her family received an outpouring of support from family members, friends, co-workers and members of the community.

Throughout her four-month battle, Anne encouraged the women in her life to get mammograms as she did extensive research on her illness and treatment options.

On Dec. 31, 2009, Anne was

admitted to the hospital with muscle pain, fever and fatigue, and died on Jan. 8, 2010.

Josh said his wife "faced the disease with courage; she was never afraid of it. She always felt that the cancer had found her for some greater purpose."

He recalls how impressed he was with the way Anne "dove into the research, trying to determine why she had gotten cancer. She was taken with the science of it. She was also interested in the prevention aspects and handed out pamphlets on the importance of breast self-exams to women she encountered."

Lahmers said her family and friends resolved Anne would not die in vain, banding together to set up a 501(c)(3) foundation to raise

money for triple negative breast cancer research.

The group is planning the Anne's Army 5K Race to Battle Breast Cancer, which will be held June 25 at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster.

"Anne loved to go to the OARDC," recalls Lahmers, adding the date for the race was set at the time of Anne's birthday, June 26.

Josh remembers his wife as "an outdoor type person who enjoyed the vibrance of flowers and nature" and had a special affinity for the OARDC's rose garden.

Registration for the race, which is expected to become an annual event, is \$25 for

See Pg. B3 — MEMORY

Memory

(Continued From Page B1)

adults until June 18, after which it is \$30. For racers age 17 and under registration is \$20, and for out-of-area registrations the cost is \$25. Registration includes a T-shirt, food and beverages, Lahmers said.

"It will be a family-friendly event," said Lahmers, adding she anticipates seeing participants pushing kids in strollers.

The race starts at 8:30 a.m. "We're really excited and we're hoping for a large turnout," said Lahmers. "A lot of people know Anne's story, and it has caught on. We believe there's going to be an outpouring of support for this. We've had a significant

response and a good number of sponsors already, though we can always use more. People are so eager to do something to make a difference in battling this disease."

Josh Wolf said the race has about \$7,000 in both large and small sponsorships. He said he hopes in its initial run the race will attract 250-350 runners, growing toward the 500 mark in future years.

Josh said the race is designed to "celebrate Anne's legacy. I think that had Anne survived, this race is something that might have been put on by her as a means of advancing research into the disease. It would be interesting if one of

the dollars raised by this event was the dollar that actually found the cure."

Lahmers said funds raised through the 5k race will go to the James Cancer Hospital at The Ohio State University to benefit triple negative breast cancer research. She added it is hoped Anne's Army will participate in Wooster's Relay for Life and other events aimed at battling cancer.

For more information go to www.annesarmy.org or contact Lahmers at 614-771-6752 or lahmers@wowway.com.

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