

Geoff Oldfather: Pink Tie lunch will raise money, awareness

By Geoff Oldfather

Tuesday, September 11, 2007

I try to put myself in their place.

Imagine you're a single mom working two jobs and struggling to make ends meet.

You own your house, but taxes and insurance are making it harder and harder to meet the mortgage payment, and taking just one of your children to the doctor means going without something else that month.

Then you learn the most devastating news of your life.

You have breast cancer.

You don't have insurance.

On the Treasure Coast it's a scenario being repeated more and more often.

That's where the Pink Tie Friends gets involved.

"These women are the working poor, uninsured or under-insured and it's a huge problem here," said Pat Harrison, the group's president.

Their mission is simple.

Come up with money to help breast cancer patients with their bills so they can concentrate on their treatment.

By the time a patient is referred to the Pink Tie Friends they've probably been to several healthcare providers or agencies and learned they fall into a "gap" in terms of coverage.

They're patients who have little or no insurance but make just enough money or have enough assets that they don't qualify for other aid.

One recent case is typical.

"We had a woman who re-mortgaged her home and then got a credit card and maxed it out to pay for her medical expenses," Harrison said.

"Then she had nowhere else to go. But she couldn't meet any more of her bills, so she was referred to us," Harrison aid.

The Pink Tie Friends has negotiated a contract with Martin Memorial Health Systems for mammograms, surgery, chemotherapy and other services at reduced rates that the organization then helps pay for.

"We have helped 27 patients so far and — so far — we haven't turned anyone away," Harrison said.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month and in advance of that the Pink Tie Friends is conducting its first Pink Tie Friends Luncheon at the Club Med Sandpiper resort in Port St. Lucie at 11 a.m. Sept. 22.

They'll roll out the 2008 Pink Tie Friends calendar and the women — and for the first time a male breast cancer patient — who grace the calendar. They'll also offer raffle tickets for two Pink Tie Friends bracelets worth \$3,700 each and donated by the Jewelry Design Studio in Jensen Beach.

There will be a silent auction, and guest speaker Jasse Matasse will talk about the best-seller, "The Secret."

They're hoping they'll fill every one of the 240 seats that will be available.

"We hope to raise \$10,000," Harrison said.

So they don't have to turn anyone away.

Martin County columnist Geoff Oldfather can be reached at (772) 221-4217 or geoff.oldfather@scripps.com. Catch Geoff Sunday mornings from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. on The Coast, 101.3 FM, for the Coast Forum, live call-in talk radio on local issues.

PINK TIE FRIENDS FIRST LUNCHEON

What: Luncheon, silent auction, 2008 calendar and models

Cost: \$45 per person

When: Sept. 22, 11 a.m.

Where: Club Med Sandpiper resort, 4500 S.E. Pine Valley St., Port St. Lucie

Information: (772) 334-7733 or (772) 398-5100 www.pinktiefriends.org

