



While she battles a brain tumor Rose DiGangi's East Islip family is holding a fundraiser to benefit the American Brain Tumor Association on Fire Island this Sunday. Photo courtesy of the DiGangi family

# Don't call it a memorial

*Family organizes an American Brain Tumor Association benefit for mom*

By RYAN McGARRY

**EAST ISLIP** — Refusing to give up hope, Rose DiGangi, who is currently battling a brain tumor, and her family have decided to fight the disease together, and for all of the others the life-threatening ailment inflicts.

Rather than standing idle by her side, DiGangi's family has, in just over one month's time, organized a fundraising 5K run and festival to celebrate their mother's life.

The event is also a means for the DiGangi children to fight the disease as their mother does by raising an expected \$40,000 for the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA) to fund further research.

Scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 12 at the Fire Island Hotel and Resort on Cayuga Street in Ocean Bay Park, Fire Island, the daylong fundraiser will begin with a 5K run at 10:30 a.m.

Following the morning race, the DiGangis and the Fire Island Hotel and Resort will host a festival that will be filled with food provided by the Irish Coffee Pub, raffles, and live music by a Fire Island staple, Johnny "Irish" Borland and Dan Lauterman.

"My mom loves gardening and nature, so what better place to have this event than Fire Island?" asked Anthony DiGangi, 28, whose family has lived in East Islip for the past 40 years. "The scenic and family-friendly Ocean Bay Park of Fire Island was a natural fit and prime location to host the 5K and festival," he added.

Aside from the beautiful locale, Fire Island was also chosen as the fundraising site due to the long-lasting and personal relationships the family has developed with the Ocean Bay Park community during the past 15 years.

Both John and Anthony DiGangi spend their summers working as bar-

tenders at the Schooner Inn. The pair also served the Fire Island Ferries throughout their teenage years; the Bay Shore-based ferry company has donated 200 passenger tickets, freight usage, and a cash contribution for the event.

With organizing efforts beginning as early as June 10, the DiGangis have already come close to registering their maximum allotment for runners, 300, and are expecting hundreds more to join in for the festival.

"It's unbelievable, especially for a first-time event," said ABTA Special Projects Coordinator Angela Allegretti, who, while overseeing ABTA fundraisers across the country, has noticed a growing amount of support for similar, local fundraisers.

The DiGangis decided to work with ABTA because, unlike other organizations, ABTA was the only one that allowed them to earmark the full amount raised to funding research.

With plenty of music, food, people, and prizes such as gift certificates, Mets and Yankees tickets, sporting equipment, and specialty packages, the day is sure to be filled with fun while serving to support a noble cause.

"Our mom has always, and continues to, support and encourage all five of her children in everything we set out to accomplish," said John DiGangi, 35, anxious to give back to the woman who has given him so much.

"I don't think there's ever been an event of this caliber on Fire Island," said Anthony, expecting the event to be both successful and exciting yet remaining a tremendous undertaking.

Registration for the event will be held at the Fire Island Hotel in Ocean Bay Park on Saturday, Aug. 11 from 2 to 4 p.m. and Sunday, Aug. 12 from 8 to 10 a.m. For more information, please visit the race and festival website: [www.thelastmileracing.comfi5k](http://www.thelastmileracing.comfi5k). ■