

Remembering mom through family and fellowship

Second annual Run for Rose slated for Aug. 10

By EMILY PORTOGHESE

EAST ISLIP — The American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA) announced that a fellowship has been awarded to a California-based doctor in honor of Rose DiGangi, an East Islip resident who passed away last fall from an aggressive malignant brain tumor.

Two months after the inaugural 5-mile run/walk in Ocean Bay Park to raise money for brain tumor research last August, Rose DiGangi lost her battle of 13 months to the disease in October.

This year, the event on Sunday, Aug. 10 is being called "The Run for Rose," to honor the 40-year East Islip resident and DiGangi family matriarch, who had five children and three grandchildren, as well as a passion for anything outdoors.

Her sons, John and Anthony DiGangi, both work on Fire Island and have made many contacts in the community. Their mother also had a fondness for the beautiful island, which makes the venue all the more appropriate.

Fire Island Hotel is the head sponsor of the event, as they have donated their space for the benefit following the run. The race starts and ends at the hotel and participants will run or walk through the Ocean Bay Park and Seaview communities.

At 10:30 a.m., the race will begin, with the benefit following the run beginning at noon and ending at 5 p.m. Glaceau Smartwater and Heineken have also



Dakota Lopez, 14, ran in last year's event. He grew up across the street from Rose DiGangi.

Photo courtesy of the DiGangi family

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donated their products to sell at the event for fundraising, and local restaurants donated gift certificates for the raffle.

Angela Allegretti, the director of volunteer events at ABTA, said the organization is funding 42 fellowship research awards, eight grants, and 11 summer medical student fellowships as of July 1.

The Rose DiGangi/ABTA Fellowship has been awarded to Dr. Rahul Jandial of the Burnham Institute for Medical Research in LaJolla, California. The title of the research project is "Lineage Mapping of a Brain Tumor."

The ABTA tries to connect a fellowship in memory or honor of a person. "That's what makes it personal and real," Allegretti said, and added that the DiGangi family hosted an extravagant fundraiser last year and "worked together as a family to make it all come together." Last year, this event raised \$67,000, and the DiGangis expect to raise even more money this year.

The ABTA provides patient education materials free of charge, and Allegretti's role is to help the family through the process of organizing events such as this race. The net pro-

ceeds of events come to the association to fund resources such as education materials and social services.

All five DiGangi children, Anthony, Joe, Sal, John and Samantha, organized the run with their father, Sal, with Anthony and John taking the lead. Each sibling performed different tasks in helping to take care of their mother and organize the run, Anthony said. "Last year was definitely tough. It was just overwhelming at the time."

The family planned on their mother coming to the run, but unfortunately, Rose DiGangi had to be hospitalized prior to the event and was unable to attend. The DiGangi children made a call to their mother and had everyone send their best wishes to Rose. Anthony DiGangi thinks the fellowship is a giant step. "What's great about it is that you know where the money is going," he said. The family's goal for this event is to raise awareness and funds so there can be more research done. "This is also a celebration of her (Rose DiGangi's) life, and the way she touched all of our lives," he added.

Registration to participate in the run/walk is now closed at 300 participants, but there is no cost to attend the benefit. ■