



Last year's 5K Run for Rose is seen here getting off to a great start. Photos provided

A run in memory of Rose

Annual 5K raises money to help families

By RICK CHALIFOUX

FIRE ISLAND—This Sunday, July 28 will mark the 7th year of the Fire Island 5K Run for Rose, set to start and finish at the Schooner Inn in Fire Island's Ocean Bay Park. The fundraising event is dedicated to the memory of East Islip resident Rose DiGangi, who passed away in the fall of 2007 after a 13-month battle with glioblastoma, an aggressive malignant brain tumor. Over the previous six years, the annual affair raised over \$300,000 for the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA). This year, however, DiGangi's family has incorporated its own non-profit — the Rose DiGangi Foundation (RDF).

"ABTA is a large organization that provides research grants to doctors and contributes to support networks across the country," said Rose's son Anthony DiGangi, a Manhattan resident who spearheaded the event with the rest of his family following her diagnosis in 2006. "But our mission is to get donors' dollars directly into the hands of patients and their families as quickly as possible to offset the wide range of costs associated with the disease. We have a big family with five siblings, so my mom always had a strong

support network. But there are others out there who don't have that, and we want to make sure we reach them."

DiGangi went on to express his deep personal commitment to RDF and the continued success of the annual 5K.

"My mom was the type of person who'd always provide for others and do the right thing," said DiGangi. "So it feels good to be able to celebrate her life every year. Losing her is still difficult to cope with, but this is our way of carrying on her spirit."

DiGangi said he expects about 400 people to attend Sunday's event, which will also consist of a post-party at the Schooner Inn featuring live music and complementary giveaways. He also indicated plans to partner with other like-minded organizations over time, and noted that RDF is looking to hold additional charity events throughout the year, with potential locations including New York City and his hometown of East Islip.

"An event like this brings families, friends, and communities together," said DiGangi. "Many families have created their own fundraising teams, and pockets of people from different towns are given



Rose DiGangi

the ability to form bonds that wouldn't have otherwise existed."

Contributions to RDF can be made via the race website at www.fi5k.org. Online registration is closed, but registration may still be available on-site during the day of the race. ■