

For Rose

Rose DiGangi passed away on October 20, 2007, after courageously fighting a battle against Glioblastoma, a malignant brain tumor. The Rose DiGangi Foundation (RDF) was established by her family to honor her memory by giving back to patients and families and easing the financial burdens associated with brain cancer. The foundation is currently incorporated as a non-profit organization with the State of New York and is pending 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service.

Rose's son, Anthony DiGangi, spoke with the *Fire Island Tide Newspaper* about his mother; the Rose DiGangi Foundation; and the annual Fire Island 5K Run for Rose, which raises money to support the mission of RDF.

Fire Island Tide: How would you describe your organization, the Rose DiGangi Foundation?

Anthony DiGangi: The Rose DiGangi Foundation is a grassroots organization founded by the children of Rose DiGangi, who passed away in 2007 of Glioblastoma, a form of brain cancer. The Rose DiGangi Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to minimizing the financial burden of families affected by brain cancer. Even with health insurance, there are still so many costs. That's why we started the foundation – to be able to help families and patients who have brain cancer. A lot of people don't have the support network like we did. My mom had five kids and my dad: we have a very large family, so we were able to have the money to help. But we know there are families out there who can't provide. So this is just our way of giving back and being able to help these families. We've raised about \$350,000 to date.

FIT: When was RDF founded?

DiGangi: The Fire Island 5K was founded in June of 2007. The first six years of the event, all of the money went to the American Brain Tumor Association. Now, we've started our own foundation, so we are currently working to distribute funds to a family in need.

FIT: What is the mission of the Rose DiGangi Foundation?

DiGangi: Our mission is to provide patients and their families with the flexibility to focus on crucial medical care as well as their overall wellness. RDF will provide funding for immediate and vital assistance, such as paying household expenses and ancillary medical costs. RDF may also partner with other organizations to help fund brain tumor research.

FIT: Can you tell me a little bit about Rose?

DiGangi: Rose was the center of our family. She always provided support to everyone and was an amazing cook. She loved the outdoors and gardening. She was the first one to help another family member or friend. We started this organization to keep her ideals going, by supporting others. I know my mom: this is what she'd want us to do. This is our way celebrating her life each year, by doing this race. And also being able to give back. Because she was such a loving person who would give back to everyone

FIT: What is the Fire Island 5K Run for Rose?

DiGangi: The Fire Island 5K Run for Rose is a 5K Run/Walk which was founded in 2007, while Rose was battling brain cancer. It's a unique event for the island, considering there are no cars or anything out there. So if you're a real runner, it's a pretty cool atmosphere to go over on a ferry and do a 5K on Fire Island. It's unique. And a lot of people who have never been to Fire Island come out for this race, and they end up coming out more often because of it.

Ages ten and over can run. The Run starts and finishes in Ocean Bay Park. All proceeds from the race benefit the Rose DiGangi Foundation and its mission. The Race finishes at the Schooner Inn. There is a post-party at the Schooner Inn for everyone to attend. We have live music, raffles, and an auction. We give out medals to the top three in every age group. Every runner gets a free shirt.

FIT: When is this year's event?

DiGangi: Sunday, August 10, 2014 at 10:30 a.m.

FIT: How can people register for the Fire Island Run?

DiGangi: People can go to our website, which is FI5K.org, and that's where they'd be able to register for the run this year. You can also sign up to fundraise for the foundation as well through there. We're opening registration on June 3.

FIT: It's a limited registration. How many people do you accept?

DiGangi: No more than 600.

FIT: Is there anyone who has helped you with the Run for Rose?

DiGangi: Each year the Ocean Bay Fire Department and Auxiliary help man the course. We have countless other volunteers made up of family and friends to help us put on this special race. We have many sponsors who contribute funds as well as goods to help us produce the race. These include The Schooner Inn, Heineken, Snapple, TK New York, Delesia Construction, Fire Island Ferries, Kamco Supply Corp, and many others which can be found on our website, www.fi5k.org.

FIT: How else can people help the Rose DiGangi Foundation?

DiGangi: Folks can volunteer for this year's race, or participate in the run, and they can set up a fundraising campaign. You can also simply donate to the cause either online or by mailing a check to: Rose DiGangi Foundation, 181 E. 93rd Street, Apt 3A, New York, NY 10128

FIT: Is there anything else you'd like people to know?

DiGangi: It's amazing how everyone on Fire Island supports us. All the volunteers we get – people just show up and throw on a volunteer shirt. The only really paid help is our timing company. Everyone else is volunteers. ■



Photo by Jim Williams



Photo by Steven Jaffe