

HUNTINGTON

It's A 'Cancerversary'

Sisters kick off 10-week fundraising campaign



Sisters Melissa and Erin are taking part in a 10-week-long fundraising campaign to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

By Stephanie DeLuca

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Two sisters who graduated from Huntington High School are cancer survivors, and they want to give back to the organization that helped them overcome their diseases as well as celebrate their "cancerversaries."

To commemorate surviving after their cancer diagnoses, Erin Zammett Ruddy, who was diagnosed 10 years ago, and her sister Melissa Zammett Gonzalez, who was diagnosed a year after Ruddy, are taking part in a 10-week-long "The Man and Woman of the Year" fundraising competition to raise money for the Melville-based Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS). The organization's mission is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and to improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

"This is our first [cancerversary]. I would celebrate it each year... but 10 years felt like it was a big deal and we also wanted to do something that was major," Ruddy said.

Ruddy, who was a volleyball star at Huntington High School and is now a full-time freelance writer living in Centerport, was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia 10 years ago at 23 years old, while working at *Glamour*. After 18 months of treatments and taking a drug called Gleevec, she was in remission. Due to her type of cancer, she has to stay on the pill forever.

A year after Ruddy found out she had cancer, Gonzalez, who still lives in Huntington and works as a certified public accountant, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. She was seven months pregnant with her first child.

"I had a lump on my neck for a while but it wasn't that big and then I woke up one morning and it was the size of a tennis ball," Gonzalez said.

While pregnant, she was undergoing chemotherapy - which was tested and found safe for the fetus. After the baby

was born, Gonzalez continued with treatment. About nine months after she finished her treatment, she relapsed and had a stem-cell transplant. She has been cancer free for the last seven years.

Today, the women's lives are "full, hectic, fabulous and great."

To help other patients and family members, the sisters have planned various events and will be accepting donations through their website from March 8 through May 17. Ruddy and Gonzalez set their goal at \$100,000. If their goal is met, each of them can get their name on a research grant at a hospital in their honor.

Ruddy and Gonzalez' first event will be held at Rexer-Parkes clothing boutique in Huntington village on April 4. Ruddy said Elizabeth Rexer's father died of lymphoma a few years ago, and she wanted to get involved with the sisters' campaign.

Joanina wine shop and restaurant will be donating its services for the night, and Rexer-Parkes will be giving 15 percent of their sales from 6 to 9 p.m. to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Men can also shop, with offerings from Joseph Custom Clothier's menswear.

Their flagship event will be held at Honu in Huntington village on April 30.

"Mark Zecher at Honu has been fantastic to work with. We wanted to do a local place that has a good vibe, good food, big bar and big space where we could fit a ton of people," Ruddy said.

For \$125, participants can enjoy an open bar from 7 to 10 p.m. as well as food, dancing and a performance by a 10-man a capella band, Straight No Chaser. There will also be a silent auction. A few of the items include packages from the Mets, Yankees, Giants, vacation packages, David Yurman jewelry and Michele watches.

The women are hoping to raise \$50,000 at the Honu event alone. All tickets must be purchased in advance on

(Continued on page A31)



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HUNTINGTON/LLOYD HARBOR

Cops: Teen Is A Major Graffiti Player On LI

By Danny Schrafel
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A Commack teen described by police as a “major graffiti player on Long Island” has been accused of tagging properties in Lloyd Harbor and Huntington village.

Kevin Wegner, 19, of Commack, was charged Monday with two counts of second-degree criminal mischief and two counts of making graffiti. The arrests are part of an ongoing investigation by First and Third Precinct Crime Section officers.

The charges in this case, First Precinct Crime Section Sgt. David O’Brien said, are related to buildings in Huntington village Wegner allegedly tagged, as well as a mural he sprayed on a seawall on private property in Lloyd

Harbor. “We suspect him in other incidents throughout Suffolk County. There’s a continuing investigation regarding him,” O’Brien said.



Kevin Wegner

Wegner was also arrested in Brooklyn in December 2011, accused of making graffiti, possessing a graffiti instrument, criminal trespassing and intent to damage property – all misdemeanors – and fourth-degree criminal trespassing, a violation.

Wegner was scheduled to be arraigned in Central Islip on Tuesday.

The investigation is ongoing. Anybody with information can confidentially call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-220-TIPS (8477).

HUNTINGTON

Cancerversary In Swing

Sisters raising money at upcoming events

By Stephanie DeLuca
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Cancer survivors Erin Zammet Ruddy and Melissa Zammet Gonzalez’ 10-week-long “The Man and Woman of the Year” fundraising event is in full swing.

The Huntington graduates’ first event will be at Rexer-Parkes at 35 Gerard Street in Huntington village on April 4. Fifteen percent of sales from 6 to 10 p.m. will be donated to the Melville-based Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. There will also be raffles, cocktails and hor d’oeuvres. Joanina wine shop and restaurant partnered for the event along with Joseph Custom Clothier’s menswear, Illegal Mezcal and Crew Kitchen and Bar. Ruddy said the father of Elizabeth Rexer died of lymphoma a few years ago, prompting the store owner to get involved with the campaign.

Ruddy was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia 10 years ago at 23 years old. A year after Ruddy found out she had cancer, Gonzalez was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma; she was seven months pregnant with her first child. The sisters are both free of cancer today.



Melissa Zammet Gonzalez and Erin Zammet Ruddy’s cancerversary fundraiser continues April 4 at Rexer-Parkes.

To celebrate their “cancerversaries,” as they are calling it, their goal is to raise \$100,000 through May 17. They are accepting donations through their website erinzammettruddy.com.

The sisters’ next local event will be held at Honu at 363 New York Ave. in Huntington village on April 30. For \$125, participants can enjoy an open bar from 7 to 10 p.m. as well as food, dancing and a performance by a 10-man a capella band, Straight No Chaser. There will also be a silent auction.

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