

*Man honors his late wife by setting up breast-cancer foundation*



Christina Walsh was only 32 when she died of breast cancer in August. Her widower founded the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation in her memory.

## Widower turns grief into a positive

BY STEPHEN BOVE  
Staff Writer

In June of this year, Bob and Christina Walsh were vacationing with their 3-year-old daughter at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Their vacation was cut tragically short, however, when conditions arising from Christina's breast cancer took a tragic turn for the worse.

"While we were in Florida, Christina's right lung collapsed," Bob Walsh said. "It just goes to show that no matter how much you know, how much you prepare, it still strikes when you least expect it."

Christina Walsh was only 32 years old when she succumbed to a 2½-year battle with breast cancer Aug. 25.

"We never saw it coming,"

said Walsh, of East Windsor, Mercer County. "Despite knowing the seriousness of her disease, we never expected it to happen when it did."

Rather than let the loss of his wife break his spirit, Walsh said he held on to the belief that, despite his family's tragedy, something positive could be salvaged.

He founded the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Founda-

tion, with the hopes of providing aid to women and families affected by breast cancer by raising money through fundraisers and donations. Walsh said the idea came about after the tragedy in Florida.

"We had to pay for an air ambulance to take her to the hospital, which cost us about \$11,000," Walsh said. "Money is

See **Grief**, Page 2

## From the Cover

### GRIEF

From Page 1

something you shouldn't have to think about in situations like that."

After returning home, word began to spread among family and friends about the Walshes' escalating medical costs.

"People began to hear about how much money this all was costing us. Before we knew it, a collection had started to help reimburse us for what we had spent," Walsh said.

It was this effort that put the idea of fund-raising into motion. Walsh said the idea actually came from his wife.

"Christina saw what the efforts of a few people who cared could accomplish," Walsh said. "She was the one who originally came up with the idea to keep it going, to use that power to help others in our situation."

With the help of friends Lou Morreale, Matt Bongiovi and Frank Lawrence, and the sponsorship of Ocean Township radio station WJLK-FM, 94.3, The Point, the Christina S.

Walsh Foundation has succeeded in organizing its largest event yet: two benefit concerts at Brookdale Community College, the second of which will be held Saturday and will feature Los Lonely Boys from Texas, The Calling from Los Angeles and a third band to be announced.

The upcoming benefit show is not a first for Los Lonely Boys, according to Henry Garza, who plays lead guitar for the band.

"We try to do benefit concerts whenever we can," Garza said. "In particular, we've done a lot of shows for The Children's Miracle Network. It just feels good to be a part of something so positive."

Morreale, who did most of the booking for the upcoming concert, said the show will feature a number of surprises and giveaways.

"We are going to be raffling off three autographed guitars," the Long Branch resident said. "One is signed by The Calling, one by Los Lonely Boys, and a third signed by Nils Lofgren, Gary US Bonds and Vini Lopez."

Walsh said the main purpose of the foundation is to raise

money for the little things that, in medical emergencies, make a huge difference.

"We want to raise money for the small things that aren't always covered by insurance, like meals and hospice care," he said. "The little things that wind up becoming huge stressors."

In addition to simply raising funds, raising awareness is a major focus of the foundation. Walsh said that, with a disease that spreads as quickly as cancer, early diagnoses are crucial.

"Christina was always aware of what was going on in her body. She took every precaution and caught every symptom right away," Walsh said. "All of that, and the cancer still took her in only 2½ years."

Walsh said that the main message the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation wants to get across to everyone is that breast cancer is a disease in which risk factors aren't factors at all.

"We want to raise awareness of the fact that this disease can strike anyone, anywhere, anytime. Christina had no history that should have led to this," Walsh said. "She didn't drink

and didn't smoke. This isn't a disease that strikes elderly women. This isn't a disease that strikes sick women. This disease can strike any woman of any age, anywhere, anytime. Christina is proof of that."

Walsh and Morreale said that, although Christina is no longer with them, her memory and legacy live on through the efforts of the foundation, and everyone else working to help provide awareness and one day, a cure for breast cancer.

"I knew that if Christina can see what we are doing," Walsh said. "She'd be pleased, and I'll bet a little embarrassed. She never liked being the center of attention. She never let the disease become her identity. She was a mother and a wife, never a victim."

Los Lonely Boys and The Calling will perform Saturday at Brookdale Community College's Collins Arena. Tickets are \$35. Doors open at 7 p.m. For more information, call (732) 224-2639.

For more information on the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation or to make a donation, call (609) 448-5420.