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Volunteer Service Essay

### Squeeze a Boob, Save a Life

Last year approximately 1.4 million Americans were diagnosed with cancer and 565,000 died from the disease. These numbers have decreased over the years, but it is still too large of a number. Those numbers are one reason why, for my volunteer project I chose to be captain for a Relay for Life team.

I chose to help raise money for Relay for Life because I have been personally affected by the disease through my friends and family who have battled it. It was a great way to be in a leadership position and meet new people who were also passionate toward raising money to find a cure.

Our duties as captains started with a meeting to inform us where and when to turn the money in, how to register online, and ways to motivate people to join and raise money. Next we had a meeting with our team members to pass on the information we have received. Now was the important task of raising money. I have a hard time asking people to donate money because it seems that was all I did in high school. I overcame this fear knowing the money they gave was going to an amazing cause. On April 9<sup>th</sup> was bank night, where we could pick up our free t-shirts and turn in the money we raised.

It was Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> when the night of Relay for Life actually happened. Although it was the 13<sup>th</sup>, it was not an unlucky night for us. There were 1,500

participates who helped raise \$85,000. Sadly, we did not reach our goal of \$110,000, but I think it was due to lack of awareness and excitement. According to people I knew who participated and lived off campus, they did not know about the event until the last minute. They either had to quickly put a team together, find one to join, or not participate at all. I also heard from several others the night of the Relay was not as fun as it was in previous years. The consequence was most people left early.

Being a newcomer, I had a lot of fun that night. There was sense of pride I had as I walked around the dome. I knew I was walking for those who could not walk for themselves. I was not there for me, but on the behalf of others who just wish to see tomorrow. There were two things that happened that night that made me really proud to be apart of this amazing night. The first was the survivor walk. There was about 15-20 people who proudly walked about the dome. It was inspirational to me because they did not walk about being boastful but humble. Yes, they were proud about the obstacle they defeated, but you could see on their faces they knew every minute counts. The second thing was the Luminaria Ceremony. This is where people with loved ones who have either died from cancer or are fighting it right now, decorate a white paper bag with the person's picture on it. Candles are placed inside the bag to make it glow. People participating in Relay for Life are welcomed to walk and look at each bag. The ceremony was really emotional for me because there were so many people who have died. The thing that hit me the hardest was it does not matter what age you are – cancer can happen to anyone. I know I have always known that fact, but it really sunk in that night. I felt proud to be alive. I was glad I am able to breathe on my own, walk on my

own, and have all my hair. That last part seems silly, but to me it would be devastating to lose my hair since it is a part of my self identity.

I would and am planning to participate in Relay for Life next year. I would encourage everyone to participate. It is such a good cause because I do not think there is one person on this earth that is not affected by cancer one way or the other. If we each do our part hopefully sooner than later there will be a cure to this awful disease. I liked the convenience of having three to four weeks to raise money. Then it is only one night full of fun activities to celebrate the survivors and help those future survivors. I want to get involved in other organizations like this since I am very passionate about helping those who cannot help themselves. I believe that if you help them when they are in someone will be willing to return the kindness you have shown for others.