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## Going the extra mile

### Resident walks for pancreatic cancer research

**-STURBRIDGE-**

By Lydia Grossi  
Town Common Writer

When Joe was losing his battle with pancreatic cancer, he left his sister with a challenge that might also end up being his greatest gift, pleading "Anything you can do to help advance pancreatic cancer screening or find a cure to prevent it from taking someone else in our family, please do it."

In that promise, Cheryl Yacovone, a local resident of Sturbridge, participated in The Lustgarten Foundation's New England Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk on Saturday, Sept.

27. The event to raise money for pancreatic cancer research was held at Mother's Rest Park in Boston.

Cheryl has lived in Central Mass. for nine years and currently works at Boston Scientific in Marlborough as a marketing communications manager in their Endoscopy Division.

She and her family know all too well the devastation that this disease can cause. Her mother and brother were taken far too young from pancreatic cancer. Her mother passed away 10 years ago and her brother lost his battle with pancreatic cancer just last November.

See WALK | PAGE 8



TOWN COMMON PHOTO BY LYDIA GROSSI

Cheryl Yacovone (far right) and her husband (middle) and her daughter at the recent Pancreatic walk this past weekend.

## GOING THE EXTRA MILE

WALK | FROM PAGE 1

Over 280,000 individuals will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this year. It is the fourth leading cause of cancer death. Pancreatic cancer has been called the "silent" disease due to the fact that the early stages do not cause symptoms. To date, there are no widely accepted screening procedures for early detection of pancreatic cancer and no cure.

This past August, Cheryl went to a

high risk pancreatic cancer clinic where she learned that her family history increases her risk of developing this disease. The clinic ran various blood tests which are currently being evaluated. "They did an MRI and scheduled a pancreatic ultrasound," she said. "These tests allow physicians to look inside my body's organs to screen for cancer very early before there are any symptoms."

The results of Cheryl's tests will also help determine if other family members would benefit from early screening too. Today, Cheryl is completely healthy but relieved to have the opportunity for early screening.

"People can develop pancreatic cancer long before having any symptoms. That's why it's important to talk to your physician about your family history, understand cancer risk factors and bring up any questions or concerns you may have about your health. It could end up saving your life!"

Working at Boston Scientific has given Cheryl a better understanding of GI diseases such as pancreatic cancer. "I

am so proud to work at Boston Scientific where I can be involved in fundraising to support cancer research and developing products that help diagnose and treat GI diseases. When I first joined the company, I learned that my mother had received a biliary metal stent that Boston Scientific had developed. This stent was placed in a short outpatient procedure to open a blocked bile duct caused by her cancer and it gave my mom almost immediate relief. We left the hospital an hour after the procedure and had a wonderful lunch together! I remember thinking what an amazing device this was! When my job search led me to Boston Scientific a year later, I was delighted."

Cheryl is part of a Boston Scientific team called 'Close the Gap'. "Our mission is to recognize health disparities in our population. They try to "close the gap" by fundraising to support education, research and cancer screening activities working with other organizations such as the Lustgarten Foundation.

"Knowing that the work we do every day is making a difference in people's lives

just fuels my passion to keep my promise to my brother - to do what I can to prevent pancreatic cancer from taking someone else in our family," she said. "And knowing that it could actually be my own life that is saved through the research and screening that I am now doing means that my brother's challenge and last wish could indeed be his greatest gift!"

Over the last few years, Boston Scientific employees have raised more than \$50,000 through fundraising activities. "This year, we are hoping to raise at least \$30,000." All proceeds from this Walk will go toward funding intensive research and raising awareness for pancreatic cancer."

Walking in this year's Lustgarten Foundation Pancreatic Research Walk, Cheryl said, "I thought it might be such a sad day for me because of losing my mom and brother. But it was uplifting and inspirational to get together with so many people with such passion for finding a cure, supporting each other and celebrating the lives of survivors and loved ones."