



## 11 Year Cancer Survivor to Head Pancreatic Cancer 5K Walk October 9, 2014



Rochester, N.Y.—The Pancreatic Cancer Association of Western New York has announced that **Michael Donnelly, an 11-year pancreatic cancer survivor** and a board member at Wilmot Cancer Institute, is the **2014 Honorary Chair of its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Step It Up! Cure Pancreatic Cancer 5K Walk**. The fundraiser held every November is an indoor 5K walk and family fun day. The 2014 event is scheduled for **Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at RIT's Gordon Field House from 12:00 noon until 4:00 p.m.** Organizers state that the purpose of the event is to create awareness and generate financial support for local research at the Wilmot Cancer Institute as well as programs and services for patients and their families.

Michael Donnelly, CEO of The Donnelly Company, and a senior career coach, has been an active board member at the Wilmot Cancer Institute since 2006. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2003, this November marks his 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a pancreatic cancer survivor. He is also associated with the California-based PANCAN organization and helps counsel patients considering having or who have had the Whipple procedure; a surgery he also underwent to remove the tumor in his pancreas.

“To serve as the Honorary Chair of the 2014 Pancreatic Cancer Association of Western New York’s, (PCAWNY) annual Step It Up! Cure Pancreatic Cancer 5K Walk is indeed a humbling honor, which has a special significance in my being an 11-year survivor of this dreaded cancerous disease,” remarked Donnelly. He added, “The significant strides that this volunteer group has accomplished in these past four years of securing over \$230,000 in financial support directed toward cancer research at the Wilmot Cancer Institute is to be highly commended. Without their dedicated endeavors, the financial “Seed Grants” provided to researchers, Dr. Hucky Land and Dr. Hezel that resulted in a \$2-million grant from the NCI would never have been a reality.”

Throughout his career in communications and financial advancement consulting, he has worked with several major corporations including Eastman Kodak Company, The Du Pont Company, ER-Associates, and The Smithsonian Institute. He served as Director of Communications/Press Secretary for Tom Golisano’s 1994 campaign for Governor of New York State. Additionally, Donnelly was Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer for the Genesee Hospital Foundation and Executive Director of the Rochester Italian Heritage Foundation. Donnelly splits his time between Rochester and Marco Island, Florida. He is an advisor with the Finger Lakes Region American Cancer Society and when in Florida he is active with the Marco Island American Cancer Society Support Group. He and his wife, Helen, are Penfield residents.

“The walk is our major fundraiser and a huge opportunity for us to create community awareness,” stated Mary Ellen Smith, Pancreatic Cancer Association of WNY Vice Chair. Smith added, “As a survivor, Michael plays a significant role as honorary chair in helping us bring more awareness to this horrific disease. To those diagnosed and their families, he also brings hope – something that we strive to create through the upbeat tone of the walk and by educating people about this disease.”

The Pancreatic Cancer Association of Western New York is a community grassroots organization of volunteers who came together five years ago to effect change after their lives were affected by pancreatic cancer whether it was the loss of a loved one or loved one fighting the disease. The agency’s annual Step It Up! Cure Pancreatic Cancer 5K Walk is an indoor event geared toward the whole family. Organizers stated that the day is full of entertainment that all ages will enjoy. Held at RIT’s Gordon Field house, it accommodates those who wish to walk the 5K or just enjoy the performances. One of the featured groups performing is the University of Rochester’s all male A Cappella group, the YellowJackets. There are also several kids’ activities including clowns, a bounce house, games, and face painting. Food is available as well. Serving as master of ceremonies for the afternoon is Scott Spezzano from 98.9 The Buzz. People are encouraged to register early and can register as an individual or a team. Walk details and registration information can be found on their website at [www.pcawny.org](http://www.pcawny.org).

Event organizers state that a portion of this year’s event proceeds will directly benefit local pancreatic cancer research conducted at Wilmot Cancer Institute by Helmet “Hucky” Land, Ph.D. and Aram Hezel, M.D. PCAWNY has made an annual donation the past four years to help advance their research work. Lorie Perez, Pancreatic Cancer Association of WNY Chair stated, “We are a local organization. It was important to us to focus our support locally and towards early detection methods since finding this cancer, any cancer, in its early stages is critical to surviving it. We will continue to fund research, but we are also focusing on patient programs and services.” Earlier this year, the National Cancer Institute awarded Land and Hezel a \$2 million dollar grant enabling them to further their gene research. Donnelly stated that, “Today’s research efforts to combat Pancreatic Cancer are paramount if we are to be successful in finding ways to cure those afflicted/diagnosed with this severe ailment. Dedicated research combined with clinical trials used effectively may provide the answer.”

Pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. and third in Monroe County. Of the top ten cancers, pancreatic cancer has only a single digit survival rate with 6% of those diagnosed surviving beyond five years. The five year survival rate has barely changed over the past 40 years, while the five year survival rate for other cancers rose from 49% to 67% or even 90% or higher. According to National Cancer Institute, new pancreatic cancers have risen 1.2% annually with death rates increasing .4% for the last 10 years. Pancreatic cancer research receives about 2% funding from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) which is the lowest funding of all major cancers. As the country’s fourth leading cause of cancer deaths, pancreatic cancer ranks 11th in funding from the NCI.

***About Pancreatic Cancer Association of Western NY – Pancreatic Cancer Association of WNY (PCAWNY), an all volunteer organization established in 2009, is a Rochester, NY based charity established to create awareness, raise funding, and advocate for all those affected by pancreatic cancer. Learn more at [www.pcawny.org](http://www.pcawny.org)***

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