



## “Long Island 2-Day Walk to Fight Breast Cancer”

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It was raining at 7 a.m. on Saturday morning, June 4, when over 300 people gathered at Smith Point Beach. The sky was a cheerless gray and the crowd a sea of ponchos and backpacks. Then, amid the storm, these people with dampened clothes, but not dampened spirits, began to sing The Beatles’ “Here Comes the Sun”. These are the people who signed up for the Long Island 2 Day Walk to Fight Breast Cancer.

Among the crowd were old friends, new friends and young couples like Jodi LaSalla-Diemer and her husband Robert Diemer. They embraced, proudly prepared to walk for a cure, and as Robert Diemer said, “to walk for those who can’t this year.” He walks not only to honor his mother who was taken by this disease, but also to support his wife Jodi who is a breast cancer survivor.

The 35-mile course that the courageous and supportive walkers endure meanders through the scenic south shore. “We go past lakes and golf courses, it’s really a pretty route,” said Debbie O’Rourke, Vice-President of the Long Island 2 Day Walk to Fight Breast Cancer. Trekking through the Mastics, Shirley and Yaphank, the participants were accompanied by EMTs and the Suffolk County Police Department to ensure a safe journey. When necessary, traffic was prohibited where the walk was in procession. Ample rest stops were set up along the way as well as numerous portable restrooms. Upon reaching South Haven Park, the 10-mile mark, walkers enjoyed lunch donated by Subway.

Cathedral Pines in Middle Island was the last stop for day one. The walkers were treated to pre-pitched tents and soothing hot showers. They dined on meals donated to the walk by Carrabba’s Italian Grill. When they awoke the following morning breakfast was served to refuel them for the 15- mile walk back to Smith Point. The bridge to Smith Point was lined on both sides with pink ribbons. An archway of pink balloons was erected for the more than 300 survivors who walked the last four miles to the closing ceremonies in hot pink shirts, followed by the rest of the walkers in gray. Suffolk County Legislator Peter O’Leary was there to speak encouraging words at the closing ceremony. That day the sun did come out.

Debbie O’Rourke was positive that the walk this year raised even more than the \$306,000 from the year before. “It’s all about Long Island,” she said. “All the proceeds go to Long Island charities to help get the word out. Ginny Salerno, (President of the Long Island 2 Day Walk to Fight Breast

Cancer) wanted to give something back to Long Island.” Every cent gets distributed to such leaders in the fight against breast cancer as the Babylon Breast Cancer Coalition, the Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Sister’s Network Suffolk County and cancer research at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, to name a few beneficiaries.

In only its second year, the Long Island 2 Day Walk to Fight Breast Cancer has not only greatly benefited Long Island breast cancer research and patients, but provided a strengthened sense of community. “It’s the best thing I’ve ever done,” said Deborah Fontana, one of the many walkers.

With each year that passes, more money will be raised for the fight against breast cancer. To learn more about the Walk For a Cure, please visit the Long Island 2 Day Walk to Fight Breast Cancer on the web at [www.libreastcancerwalk.org](http://www.libreastcancerwalk.org), or phone them at 631-863-2DAY (2329).