

Las Sendas Up Close

Bringing neighbors closer to their community

May 2011

RED MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL HOSTS Hawaiian Fun to Help Combat Cancer

By AnnElise Makin

This Relay for Life East Mesa played itself out at a Hawaiian beach called Red Mountain High School track, and the luau brought together some 1,200 people—survivors and supporters, in the fight against cancer.

During the all-night walkathon, 108 teams raised more than \$110,000 for the American Cancer Society (ACS). Top leader Team Grandpa Ray brought in 10 grand!

Although this year had not reached last year's record attendance, the exhilaration flew just as high. Schools, workplaces and clubs of all sorts drove their knack for fund raising at full throttle with treats, arts, objects of desire and all kinds of activities.

A well-sized Circle of Friends team, 17 strong, was selling fresh pineapples, chocolate covered strawberries and leis. Marietta Hauser, from Alta Mesa, and her twin children, Robert and Olivia, had come to rally for their grandmother in Connecticut.

"My mom was diagnosed with breast cancer about a year ago," Marietta recalled. Her mother had skipped the mammogram one year only to be shaken up by a stage III-IV cancer. She had just finished her chemotherapy regimen, and prospects were good.

"Her hair is growing back now," Marietta reported with happy relief, and she went straight back to hawking her merchandise. Her team captain, Julianne Foster, a Red Mountain High senior and 10-year veteran, started with the Relay with girl scouts at *brownie* age, rooting for breast cancer cures for her two aunts and her grandmother.

Stories were palpably dense in the survivor tent.



Chandler residents Jim and Ellie Rael have done the Relay for eight years. Jim's PSA-positive test in the year 2000 indicated prostate cancer, which was removed. Several years later, he found a lump on his neck, which also was cancerous. "Be sure you get your yearly checkups," he now says.

Jim's wife, Ellie, battled ovarian cancer in 1995. At a regular checkup, her physician found a large, stage IV mass in her stomach. "I had no symptoms other than being full and not able to eat," she remembered. The former Red Mountain High security staff member underwent chemotherapy for six months.

"Some day we will find a cure for cancer without chemotherapy," said survivor Russ Gillard, from Boulder Mountain. The state's lead ambassador for the Cancer Action Network of the ACS and retired engineer has one of the most harrowing stories to tell.

In 1994, Russ experienced seizures in the night. Those were the symptoms of a brain tumor. So, the tumor was surgically removed, and Russ set out on a long road to recovery. Then, one day, Russ experienced shortness of breath severe enough to consult a pulmonologist. He learned he had an inoperable chest lymphoma.

"But I didn't want chemotherapy and have my family see me deteriorate," Russ said, recalling the shattering diagnosis. Both his parents had died from cancer, and he had seen how badly the chemotherapy affected them.

Cancer treatment, however, has made considerable progress since then. Russ submitted to the doctor's advice, and coped with the regimen well enough. Two months into chemo, the brain tumor came back, as well. High doses of radiation were required.

"I don't mind the baldness," Russ joked, because he finds comb-overs just plain silly. The hair will never grow back as the radiation killed the follicles. In addition, Russ has to take anticonvulsant medication to support the surgically damaged part of the brain.

Russ, who plays softball and golf, considers himself extremely lucky. "I take my being alive as a message that I need to be helping people," he said. He feels he can help the most through his pinpointed, national-level health agenda.

"There are probably more than 5,000 Relay events nationwide, which raise approximately \$500,000 annually," he said. "But if we can get Congress to move in on cancer research, we can possibly get amounts in the one billion range allocated."

Advocates like Russ still have lots to do until they have that money in the bank. In the meantime, the Relays across the land continue beating the drums of awareness for cancer research. ■

Freedom Rock Experience honors American heroes

By Danny Jones

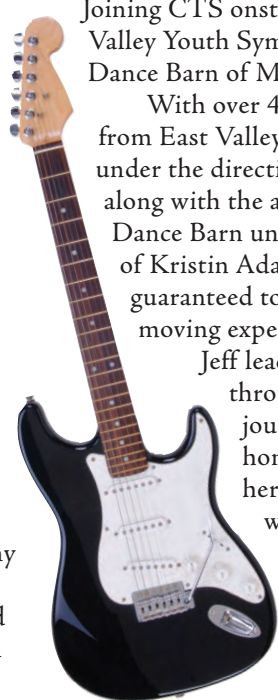
From Hollywood film pilot to front man, singer and songwriter of rock band CTS - Consider The Source, Jeff Senour has embarked on a historic undertaking designed to reach, touch and move the hearts of people of all ages at the *Freedom Rock Experience*.

Accompanied by the East Valley Youth Symphony, this high octane combination of Jeff's original music paired with a visually stunning video backdrop will inspire those of all ages to live the American Dream.

The event is scheduled for May 28 at 7 p.m. at the Mesa Arts Center.

The *Freedom Rock Experience* honors the real American heroes in our lives, those men and women who serve to protect our freedom in America.

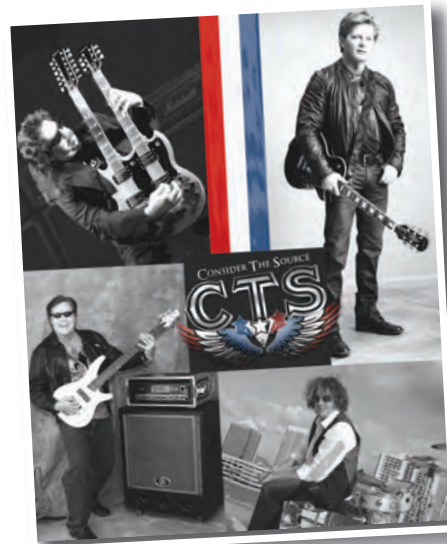
The powerful rock sound of CTS is backed by world class musicians. The lineup of CTS includes Tony Lugo - The Flying Hawaiian on lead guitar with his famous wall of sound guitar solos, followed by the solid foundation of Joe McGinnity on drums, Jeff VanDusen on bass guitar and Keven Mandzuk on keyboards.



Joining CTS onstage will be the East Valley Youth Symphony and the Dance Barn of Mesa.

With over 40 young musicians from East Valley Youth Symphony under the direction of Ajay Patel, along with the amazing dancers of Dance Barn under the direction of Kristin Adams, this concert is guaranteed to be a completely moving experience.

Jeff leads the audience through an emotional journey, personally honoring our nation's heroes. There are times when the audience will dance in the aisles; there are times when there will not be found a dry eye. Hope is offered, and this production has touched lives every time Jeff and



CTS have performed the show. It is an incredible evening for everyone involved.

Benefits from the concert will go to Operation Homefront Of Arizona. As the official sponsors of the *Freedom Rock Experience*, American Airlines, Pinnacle Life Nutrition and Flancer's Pizza extend their warmest invite to join CTS, East Valley Youth Symphony and Dance Barn to come give thanks to the real American hero. ■

Tickets are on sale at the Mesa Art Center. For more information, visit the Web at www.mesaartscenter.com or www.ctsmusic.com. The Mesa Arts Center box office is located at One East Main St., or call (480) 644-6500.

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In This Issue

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----|
| Junior Golf Academy..... | 3 | Market Report..... | 8 |
| Women's Conference..... | 4 | Desert Rose at Las Sendas..... | 9 |
| Red Mountain Florist..... | 5 | Summer Youth College..... | 12 |
| AZ Mobile Tanning..... | 6 | Service Directory..... | 15 |