

Thursday, May 10, 2007 by Elizabeth Moore

Soccer players to honor late comrade in cancer fight

When the women take to the fields at Brookdale Park in Montclair and Bloomfield on June 2 for an annual soccer tournament that raises money to fight cancer, they will be paying special tribute to Michele Peters, a volunteer at the annual tournament who lost her battle with cancer last fall.

Peters and her sister, Natalie Pitts of Montclair, were both fixtures at the yearly tournament, which, for the last six years, has raised money for cancer treatment, mammograms, combating domestic violence and educating women about cancer prevention.

"She was a volunteer year after year at Goals for Life," said spokeswoman Beth Albert. "We were all saddened when she lost her battle for cancer."

Goals for Life President Kathleen M. Lee said her organization enthusiastically decided to dedicate the tournament to Peters this year. "We wanted to really honor what she'd done. This really symbolizes why we're out here."

This year, around 400 women are expected to participate in the tournament, which starts early and lasts all day. The tournament draws women from the tri-state area who compete at three different levels of play -- from novice to advanced.

Local restaurants from the Montclair area donate food that is sold throughout the day at a cafe run by volunteers and funds are also raised through T-shirt sales and an ad journal. Goals for Life has raised \$120,000 more over the last six years and donated money to the "In the Pink" program at St. Michael's Hospital in Newark, to the Susan G. Komen Foundation and to a program that helps women victims of domestic violence in the Montclair area.

This year, the proceeds from the tournament will be split evenly between two new charities -- a cancer outreach program called CORES that is run out of Columbus Hospital in Newark's North Ward and a national nonprofit organization called Casting for Recovery, which takes cancer patients to natural settings and teaches them fly-fishing.

Lee said the fly-fishing program helps boost patients' spirits and contributes to their mental well-being. "They're picking up where treatment leaves off."

For more information about Goals for Life, log onto the group's Web site at www.goalsforlife.org.

Elizabeth Moore may be reached at 973-392-1852 or emoore@starledger.com.