

GATEWAYS

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THE STORY BEHIND RUN FOR THE ROSE: DR. MARNIE ROSE'S PARENTS REFLECT ON HER LEGACY

In 2002, Marnie Rose, M.D., stunned viewers of the nationally televised reality series *Houston Medical* by pulling off her wig to reveal that she was both a doctor and a patient. The 27-year-old pediatric resident at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital had been diagnosed with and was fighting to survive brain cancer.

Dr. Rose had agreed to be on the show because she thought it would help others and also wanted to draw attention to Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital, which she felt was overshadowed by other hospitals in the Texas Medical Center. The next five episodes would chronicle her life as a first- and second-year resident who was determined to keep working despite her illness. Sadly, Dr. Rose died on August 23, 2002, from complications of her cancer, just five weeks after the show's final episode aired.

In March of her first year in residency, Dr. Rose started having headaches and some discomfort in her foot, which were followed soon after by a focal seizure during the night.

"When Marnie was diagnosed with a brain tumor, it was so horrifying to learn that brain cancer was under-

recognized, the research was underfunded, and the prognosis had not changed in 50 years," said Dr. Rose's mother, Lanie Rose. "In the last five years, there has been some amazing progress with survival time significantly extended for many, but brain tumors still often are fatal.

"Brain cancer was typically a disease of men in their 40s to 70s," said Lanie. "Marnie was a young female, a non-smoker, who worked out and led a healthy lifestyle. She wanted people to know that anyone could get a brain tumor.

"Dr. Sharon Crandell, who headed the pediatric residency program, treated Marnie so kindly and compassionately and made accommodations for her to continue with her residency as long as possible, which meant so much to Marnie."

In memory of their daughter, the Roses created the Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation and established the Run for the Rose, a fundraising run/walk to raise money for brain cancer research and to fund initiatives at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital.

"We had no idea what we were doing," said Lanie Rose. "I was

concerned that no one would show up. What if the first race just had our four family members?"

But people - including brain cancer patients who had been inspired by Dr. Rose - *did* show and the Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation was able to net \$90,000 the first year. Now going into its 10th year, the event has raised \$784,000 for Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital.

"We never would have dreamed people would continue to contribute year after year," said Lanie. "The proceeds directly benefit Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital. I encourage friends and family members of patients who want to do something special for the hospital's doctors and nurses to donate or participate in the event."

The idea that was born out of love for a daughter lost to an insidious disease has now taken on a life of its own. The Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation has helped create and develop the Pediatric Palliative Care program - one of the first in the nation, with Marnie's Garden Room - a special room painted like a rose garden where parents and siblings can spend time with pediatric

Register for the 10th Annual Run for the Rose

The 10th Annual Run for the Rose, held in the memory of Dr. Marnie Rose, a pediatrician who died of brain cancer, will take place Sunday, March 25 at Reliant Park. The 5K Fun Run/Walk begins at 8 a.m. and the 1K Family Fun Run/Walk begins at 8:30 a.m. To create a team, go to <http://runfortherose.kintera.org>. Please be sure to include "MH" or "UT" in your team names, so we can track donations. If you've already created a team, kindly email the team name to alisse.pratt@memorialhermann.org.

One T-shirt design will be created for all Memorial Hermann teams and will be free to any individual who raises \$25 or more. The event directly benefits Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and pediatric and neuro-oncology research at UTHealth Medical School.

patients nearing end-of-life, as well as helped to outfit the first pediatric Life Flight® helicopter. In addition, funds from the Rose Foundation are pioneering amazing new research to treat pediatric brain tumors in an exciting collaboration among The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) Medical School, Texas A&M and MD Anderson.

“Our foundation’s money is going to the dogs - literally,” said Dr. Rose’s father, Jerry, referring to the canine neuro-oncology research by pediatric neurosurgeon Stephen Fletcher, D.O., which they’ve funded since 2008. Dr. Fletcher started the research collaboration after his two boxers died from brain tumors and is working to create novel therapies in treating tumors that can be used on both dogs and children. In 2011, the Rose Foundation also began underwriting neuro-oncology research conducted by Min Li, Ph.D., director of the Cancer Research Program at UTHealth Medical School. “Our money is so well used,” said Jerry Rose.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Run for the Rose and Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital and Mischer Neuroscience Institute are proud sponsors of the event, which takes place Sunday, March 25 at Reliant Park.

“A lot of progress has been made in 10 years,” said Lanie Rose. “Many of those who run or walk in the race are patients with brain tumors. In the first years of the event, very few patients survived from one year to the next. In 2011, almost 30 brain cancer survivors returned and took part in the race.”

In 2010, Dr. Rose’s medical school class celebrated its 10th-year reunion. In tribute, her classmates from UTHealth Medical School arranged for their reunion to take place the weekend of the Run and to have the run as a featured attraction.

“We used to host the end-of-year party for her medical school and residency class at our ranch,” said Jerry Rose. “It meant a lot to see all those familiar faces. When Marnie was in school, we were like surrogate parents to



Marnie Rose, M.D., who was diagnosed with brain cancer during her first year of residency at Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital, became the focus of the televised reality series, Houston Medical and created awareness for the disease. When she lost her battle to cancer, her parents started a fundraiser walk/run – the Run for the Rose – which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

(left to right) This 2001 photo of Dr. Rose (center) was taken when she first began treatment for a brain tumor. Joining her are brothers Darren (left) and Myles, her twin (right), who shaved their heads as a supportive gesture.

many of them. Someone was always over at our house.”

Dr. Rose leaves many friends behind. Among her colleagues who are helping to continue the work she started through their involvement in the Run for the Rose are Polina Strug, director of Patient Experience, who counted Dr. Rose as a maid of honor, and Dr. Rose’s former boss Sharon Crandell, M.D. Strug, along with her husband, is in charge of the water stations at every race. And Dr. Crandell pays for her residents to attend the Run and babysits their children while they participate.

“I could talk for hours about my precious Marnie. We miss her every second of every day,” said her mother. “While we lost our precious daughter to brain cancer, I look at all the miracles

that have resulted because of her legacy, and know Marnie would be proud.”

“Our daughter always wanted to be a pediatrician and go into private practice,” said her father. “When she was in medical school, I bought her a marble statue to put in her first office. She never lived to see that day, so I’ve entrusted it to Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital – the place where she had so many friends and worked until the very end, when cancer took her young life.

“Marnie loved this hospital,” he continued. “This is the place where our hearts reside.”

To learn more about Dr. Marnie Rose and how you can participate in this year’s Run for the Rose, visit www.runfortherose.com ❖