

Group laces up support for prostate cancer awareness

By Samantha Nelson
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Downers Grove, IL -

While breast cancer walks and runs have spread across the country, some men afflicted with the cancer might feel they are being left in the dust.

Downers Grove-based Us TOO asked the world to lace up for prostate cancer, sending about 42,000 sets of blue shoe laces out June 15 to people making a \$5 donation. The group encouraged men to wear the laces to work to raise awareness of the second leading fatal cancer of men.

The idea of sneakers at work came to Us TOO through a representative from the American Prostate Cancer Institute, which was looking to partner with another non-profit organization, said Us Too Director of Development Pamela Barrett.

On the Web

To learn more about the group's effort to raise prostate cancer awareness, visit ustoo.org.

“(The representative) thought there was a disparity between the awareness for breast cancer patients and prostate cancer patients and wanted to do an event to start to level things,” she said. “There’s so much funding and things for breast cancer that we have a ways to catch up, but that’s OK. We’re making the first step.”

While fundraising totals are being tallied, Barrett said the event was very successful providing 360 companies with awareness materials and encouraging their employees to participate. All of the funds raised will go to patient information and support services for both newly diagnosed patients and men who have faced prostate cancer before.

Rob Anderson, a job captain for Dahlquist and Lutzow Architects, which has offices in Hinsdale and Elgin, said he learned about Us TOO when he was doing cancer research after his wife’s mother went through chemotherapy. He asked his company to participate in Sneakers at Work and handed out material from the organization.

“It just seemed like a worthwhile cause, just something that people might not talk about or do much to support,” he said. “I just think that prostate cancer doesn’t get its proper notoriety when it comes to events like this and corporate sponsors.”

About half of the company’s 50 employees participated, some wearing the laces in their hair or as bracelets. Anderson said many men thanked him for the reminder.

Barrett said getting men to speak out is key to raising awareness about prostate cancer. She pointed out Cook County Board President Todd Stroger’s decision not to publicly say he had cancer until after he’d had surgery Monday even though he was diagnosed last August.

“We’re still dealing with men who are uncomfortable admitting that they had prostate cancer,” Barrett said. “There’s still kind of a stigma. If they don’t even want to think about it or talk about it the door is not open to raise funds.”