

## Honor society students organize first cancer Relay for Life

Members of Lambda Pi Eta honor society just wanted to do something worthwhile, so they organized MSU's first Relay for Life.

By Robb Murray, Free Press Staff Writer [published in The Free Press, Mankato, MN, 5/6/2005]

Photo by John Cross



Minnesota State University students Heidi Branstad (left) and Heather Purcell are among the students who make up the MSU chapter of Colleges Against Cancer, which will sponsor a Relay for Life May 21 in MSU's Myers Field House.

MANKATO — It started the way a lot of good things start.

"We wanted to do something worthwhile," said Heidi Branstad, a senior speech communications major at Minnesota State University.

And so begins the on-campus version of the Relay for Life cancer research fund-raiser, or what Branstad, fellow organizer Heather Purcell and eight other students hope will grow into a big deal of an annual event.

The students, all members of the Lambda Pi Eta honor society, are officially members of the Colleges Against Cancer movement sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

Starting in the evening on May 21, hundreds will gather in MSU's Myers Field House to walk the night away in the first-ever on-campus Relay for Life.

For the uninitiated, the relays work like this: Teams are compiled and pledges solicited. On relay day, teams spend the night walking along a path lit with luminarias - white paper bags set aglow by candlelight - purchased in memory of someone who has died of cancer. Team members walk all night.

The students have been working since early fall semester to pull this off, and they aren't alone. Colleges across the country each year hold relays. According to the American Cancer Society, college campus relays each year raise about \$7.5 million.

Locally, they've so far solicited funds and pledges totaling about \$8,000. By the end of the relay, they hope that figure is doubled. There will be food, games, live music and a silent auction. (Any student, by the way, can join Colleges Against Cancer. It is not exclusive to Lambda Pi Eta.)

Of all deadly diseases, perhaps none is so unfortunately well known as cancer.

"We ask people, 'Who do you know that's had cancer?' and almost everyone knows somebody," Branstad said. "Of all my friends' moms, mine is about the only one who doesn't have breast cancer."

There is another Relay For Life in Mankato. But this one is run by and geared toward students. Branstad and Purcell say their goal is not to take away from the other because, in their words, they're all fighting for the same cause.