

Canter Against Cancer



This October, head to Massachusetts for a beautiful fall ride to benefit a worthy cause.

We're all tied by the pain that cancer has cast far too often on our families, friends, and ourselves. The Canter Against Cancer Benefit Trail Ride, to be held October 3, 2009, at Twin Orchard Farm in Southampton, Massachusetts, will honor all people who've struggled with this disease.

One inspirational cancer survivor, Jerri Nielsen, MD, will be celebrated in particular. Dr. Nielsen faced an unimaginable challenge when she discovered she was a victim of breast cancer 11 years ago, stranded at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, a research facility in Antarctica, where she resided as the only physician.

A self-operation revealing a cancerous tumor confirmed that Dr. Nielsen's survival depended on her ability to save herself. The brutal winter conditions of Antarctica — where darkness falls for the majority of winter and the temperature averages minus 76 degrees Fahrenheit — made it impossible for an airplane to rescue her.

Without questioning her fate or abilities, Dr. Nielsen administered chemotherapy treatments to herself. Her only tools were some supplies delivered by airdrop, and guidance through e-mails and video conferences with other physicians.

With the help of her colleagues, none with medical experience, Dr. Nielsen en-



The Canter Against Cancer will honor Jerri Nielsen, MD, a cancer survivor who treated herself while stationed in Antarctica 11 years ago.

dured the chemotherapy and survived breast cancer. Upon returning to the United States, she shared her triumph in her best-selling book, *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole*. Her story was then captured in a made-for-television movie, *Ice Bound*, starring Susan Sarandon.

During the past decade, Dr. Nielsen has also spread her passion for living as a motivational speaker. "Jerri [Nielsen] has a very inspirational message for all of us, whether

we're survivors of cancer or any other aspect of life: we have to make the best of what we have," says friend and Canter Against Cancer coordinator L.A. Pomeroy.

Horsewoman at Heart

All her life, Dr. Nielsen has treasured horses' strength, willingness, beauty, and grace. According to Pomeroy, Dr. Nielsen's memories with horses are imprinted by fond experiences, from climbing onto the broad back of a farm horse as a child or watching the elegance of a dressage horse from a distance.

Dr. Nielsen also has the best traits of a horsewoman. "She's funny, blunt, and brilliant," says Pomeroy. "She pulls no punches; she's a no-nonsense woman. She'd make a heck of a dressage rider."

Proceeds from the Canter Against Cancer ride will go toward the Jerri Nielsen M.D. Scholarship Award. In 2008, the University of Toledo College of Medicine, formerly the Medical College of Ohio, founded the award in honor of its 1977 graduate.

The award will be given annually to a graduating medical student who grew up in rural Ohio and plans to do residency training within the state. "The award goes to doctors who'll help people who don't get the cancer screenings that they should,"

says Claudia Sarti, a ride co-organizer and friend of Dr. Nielsen's. "That's what makes it very special."

Celebrating Life

The trail ride will offer an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of a New England fall. "There's nothing quite as fabulous as an autumn day in Massachusetts, experienced from the back of a horse," says Pomeroy.



Twin Orchard Farm in Southampton, Massachusetts, will hold the first Canter Against Cancer Benefit Trail Ride.



As part of their donation, trail riders can name their own trails in Twin Orchard Farm's Enchanted Forest.



Twin Orchard Farm owner Charlie Kaniecki has opened his farm of more than 140 acres and 10 miles of trails for the event.

According to Sarti, the trails are somewhat whimsical, marked by the occasional unicorn in the Enchanted Forest, or even an appearance of the noble Robin Hood on Hold Your Hat Trail. Participants can name their own trails as part of their donation.

Accompanying the ride will be a pig roast, a silent auction, and activities for non-riders. The suggested donation is \$20. Reservations will be accepted through September 25.

Sadly, Dr. Nielsen may not be able to attend the ride. Recently, she learned that her cancer has returned and spread in the shape of a brain tumor. However, ride coordinators believe that her lighthearted spirit and happiness will echo throughout Twin Orchard Farm. "We'll be celebrating life, because that's what she does," says Sarti. 

For more information on the Canter Against Cancer ride, contact Claudia Sarti, (413) 549-0050, shedancezwhorsez@aol.com. Or contact L.A. Pomeroy, (413) 586-6121, pomeroyla@aol.com. To purchase Canter Against Cancer T-shirts, mugs, and other gear, visit www.cafepress.com/canteragainstcancer.

Lauren Anne Back, The Trail Rider's contributing editor, is based in Denver, Colorado.



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