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# Swimmers Continue Fight Against Cancer At Hamptons Open Water Swim



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**By Cailin Riley**

For the sixth year, the Swim Across America Hamptons Open Water swim drew 100 participants to Big Fresh Pond in Amagansett on Saturday morning, as people whose lives have been affected by cancer, in one way or another, joined together to raise awareness and money to fight the disease, and also to honor loved ones who have died or are still fighting.

The swimmers, many of whom presented a united front as teams swimming for a specific individual or family affected by cancer, raised more than \$110,000 this year. Roughly half of that money will go to Fighting Chance, a cancer counseling and resource center based in Sag Harbor. The rest of the money will go to Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York and other cancer research groups.

Swim Across America conducts open water and pool swims from Boston to San Francisco, raising money for cancer research and treatment facilities. It has collected more than \$50 million since its inception 26 years ago.

East Hampton Volunteer Ocean Rescue officer Jim Arnold, who helped bring the event to East Hampton six years ago, pointed out that the emphasis of the swim is not on who the individual winners are in the half-mile, mile, and 5K distances the swimmers choose from. Rather, he said, the stars of the day are people like Ric Stott, whose sister, Hollie Stott, died of cancer. Stott completed the three-mile distance, fighting against a strong current that made his finish time more than a half hour longer than his time last year. But, like many swimmers who take part in the swim, he said quitting was never an option.

"As hard as this two or three hour challenge was, it's nothing compared to a cancer diagnosis," he said in a wrap-up letter to supporters who had contributed to his fundraising effort.

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While there is always a strong contingent of talented open water swimmers in the race, both local and from abroad, many other participants showed a willingness to go outside of their comfort zone, in more ways than one, to support friends and loved ones affected by cancer. Gordon Trotter and Mike DeLalio, local residents who own and operate the new Muvstrong fitness space in Springs, exceeded their fundraising goal of \$5,000 and, along with Mike Gaynor, fulfilled the promise they made to complete the swim in bright pink speedo bathing suits after doing so. The Muvstrong team raised more than \$6,500.

As usual, East Hampton Volunteer Ocean Rescue was on hand to provide support in the water, and several former Olympic swimmers also volunteered as "angels," providing encouragement and assistance to the swimmers who needed it most while out on the water.

Year in and year out, those stories of support are what matters most to Arnold.

"It's not about us, because we're healthy," he said. "The real stories are about the survivors."



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