



Leukemia Cup Regatta participants in the United States and Canada raised \$4.1 million in 2014, and \$50 million since 1988. In 2014, top fundraisers were invited to the annual Fantasy Sail Weekend in Savannah, Ga. Skipper Mark Bulovic, at left wearing a blue vest, brought fellow fundraisers out for casual racing on the Wilmington River. Ken Kleinschrodt hosted a fundraiser at the Buccaneer YC in Mobile, Ala., with his wife, Amy. The crew aboard *Ronin*, William Wildner, Cruz Schroeder, Claudia and Colleen Drummond, and Mike Foster won PHRF A in the afternoon session.

Photos: John Alexander

A FUNDRAISER'S FANTASY

HARD WORK PAYS OFF WITH A SPECIAL INVITATION FOR THE LEUKEMIA CUP'S TOP ANNUAL FUNDRAISERS.

BRENDA CHENEY'S slender legs dangle from the rail of the Beneteau Oceanis 43 *Jubilee* as we race up and down Savannah's Wilmington River. "When I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease at 34, my perspective on what really mattered changed," she tells me. "After my treatment, I became a board member of the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and I've been doing that for seven years, helping with the Leukemia Cup and a bunch of other events. When you're trying to raise money for any cause, you have to get creative."

In 2014, 47 chapters hosted 50 events to raise funds for LLS. The Leukemia Cup has joined participants' passion for sailing with the important task of raising money to fund cancer research. Top fundraising individuals and teams from all Leukemia Cup events are invited to participate in the culminating Fantasy Sail with Gary Jobson, which in 2014 was held beneath Spanish moss-draped trees at the Savannah YC.

Cheney's sentiment is repeated by many throughout the weekend, where fundraisers have come together to celebrate their own successes as well as LLS's strides in accelerating cancer cures and improving the quality of life for patients and their families.

"Every year, we have to get a little more creative with how we reach out," says Dianne Sierbrasse, communications director at Lake City YC in Minnesota. "A few years ago, we changed our format from a standard regatta to one where we invited the general public to participate. Rather than just our members racing, we'd ask them to pitch in and spread the word to their networks—bring in anyone they know."

The Lake City Leukemia Cup raised \$37,000 in 2014. "It makes the yacht club look good to the community, it brings in folks who might not go sailing otherwise and, best of all, it teaches those same people about LLS and what we do," says Sierbrasse. "It's a win-win situation."

Jobson, who was involved in the Leukemia Cup before being diagnosed with cancer himself in 2003, is the cornerstone of the event's efforts.

"It's no secret that many of our participants are motivated by not only the cause but also the chance to attend the Fantasy Sail Weekend," says Jobson.

The Fantasy Sail is a two-day event involving speakers, "honored heroes"—survivors that LLS has invited to the event—and a day of sailing in locations like Savannah, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Newport. Half the participants sail two short races on provided boats in the morning, the two groups meet at the yacht club for lunch, and then the second group gets their chance on the water. At the end of each race, Jobson boards the last-finishing boat for the next race to give them a hand. While there are prizes given to the on-water winners at the end of the day, the real reward is the accomplishment of raising so much money.

"It's a cause that most people can get behind because they're touched by it in some way," says Jobson, as he signs copies of his newest book, "Chasing Roosters," as a gift for the Fantasy Sail qualifiers. "Each event has a different personality, but they're all surrounding the same basic mission. Keeping it interesting and getting new people involved each year keeps these events growing. We offer a lot of incentives for anyone to get involved to help that along.

"Fortunately, this isn't a very difficult cause to gain support for. One in four Americans is touched by these cancers, be they a survivor themselves or have family or friends who were diagnosed. The trick is to get participation in the events we put on in order to then spread information about what LLS is actually accomplishing."

Throughout his involvement with the Leukemia Cup, Jobson has seen a variety of different events succeed, and he is quick to point out the possibilities are endless. Cheney, one of 2014's top fundraisers, has even auctioned off a dinner date with her and her dog, Frankie, at her annual Sip-and-Sail event. "We have participants who partner with local vendors to throw outdoor dinner parties and charge admission," says Jobson. "We have clubs that host one-design regattas to extend their reach beyond their own clubs."

After two races, finishing first and third in Class A, Cheney, her crewmates, and I arrive back at the dock for lunch. After sandwiches, a new batch of sailors head out to race for the afternoon. Later on, the evening comes to an end with a salute to race winners and top national fundraising individuals and teams. Celeste Shearouse, a 63-year-old cancer survivor, and Rhett Krawitt, a 6-year-old cancer survivor from San Francisco, take the stage after dessert to share their stories. "This, really, is why we do this," says Trey Rose, a Fantasy Sail qualifier from St. Clair, Mich. "The events, the parties, the competition—it's all good, but people like Celeste and Rhett are why we do what we do." ◆