

Boogie on Low Beach honors two island cancer survivors

Red Sox' Larry Lucchino will also be on hand for Dana-Farber benefit

By Page Robinson
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When Bintah Rustad and Alan Costa talk about their struggles to overcome cancer, both speak of their experience not as fighting a disease, but as a challenge, a life-changing event that gave them a new outlook on life and what their priorities should be.

"There are hidden gifts that come out of this," said Rustad, "finding one's strengths, reconnecting with people you hadn't seen for a while, telling people how you care for them, saying no to things you don't want to do, doing things you always wanted to do, but always put off, it's living for today, and it's appreciating every day you wake up."

Both Rustad and Costa fought battles with cancer and eventually prevailed over the disease after extensive treatment and a test of wills. "The most important thing is a will to live. You have to have the desire to live and you have to understand that it is going to be a fight," said Costa.

Costa and Rustad, both islanders, are two of the

honorees scheduled to speak at a fundraiser Friday to benefit Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Nantucket Cottage Hospital's Community and Home Health Department at the Low Beach Road home of summer residents George Cloutier and Tiffany Spadafora.

Larry Lucchino, president and CEO of the Boston Red Sox, is another cancer survivor and will be the other honoree at the fundraiser, which is going to have a baseball theme geared toward the world-champion Red Sox.

The event, called "Boogie on Low Beach", is already sold out.

After cocktails and ballpark food like hot dogs and popcorn, the 650 guests will have a chance to hear the honorees talk about their experiences fighting cancer and the importance of organizations like Dana-Farber. To lighten the mood and bring in some cash, attendees can then participate in a live auction with Rafael Osona and a silent auction which Spadafora is running, before dancing the night away to Memories on Fire, Cloutier's favorite band from Florida.



*Honorees Bintah Rustad (top)
and Alan Costa (bottom)*

"We wanted to make this Dana-Farber benefit a fun time, something different. I find that people are more willing to contribute if they're having fun" said Cloutier. Among the auction items will be a first pitch at Fenway Park at a Red Sox game, a float ride through Mardi Gras, six days at a multimillion-dollar home in one of the world's hottest vacation destinations, and a lunch with retired General Electric CEO, Jack Welch

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute is an organization that provides expert, compassionate care to children and adults with cancer while advancing the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure and prevention of cancer and related diseases.

It started in 1947 when the late Dr. Sidney Farber founded the Children's Cancer Research Foundation dedicated to providing children with cancer with compassionate, state-of-the-art treatment and simultaneously developing the cancer preventatives, treatments and cures of the future.

The institute officially expanded its programs to include patients of all ages in 1969, and in 1974 became known as the Sidney Farber Cancer Center in honor of its founder. The long-term support of the Charles A. Dana Foundation was acknowledged by incorporating the institute under its present name in 1983. Today, the institute employs about 3,000 people and supports more than 150,000 patient visits each year.

Though Costa has been free of cancer for four years and Rustad 10, both said that support groups like those offered by Dana-Farber helped them get through their bouts with the disease.

Costa, who believes his cancer was caused by exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, said that one of the things that changed his outlook about cancer was attending a retreat with author and doctor Bernie Segal, who told him, "If you believe you're



clockwise from top left:

***Honoree Larry Lucchino,
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute,
Boogie on Low Beach hosts
George A. Cloutier and
Tiffany Spadafora***

going to die, your body will accommodate you."

Costa, the former head of the air traffic control tower at Nantucket Memorial Airport and now manager of the Miacomet Golf Course, said the conversation made him realize that if he didn't have the right frame of mind, he wasn't going to beat the disease.

"A diagnosis of cancer is not a death notice, it's a wake-up call and a tremendous challenge. The support groups are just a place to go to laugh and cry and unburden yourself. It's a healthy place where you get a lot of help," said Rustad, who still attends cancer groups to support those going through what she did.

"We are very fortunate here on Nantucket because our cancer group with the hospice is not limited, it's open to people with any stage of cancer."

Rustad was lucky enough to receive treatment from Dana-Farber 10 years ago while she was sick and said that though it was a grueling experience, "The confidence in knowing that I was in good hands was comforting."

Rustad spoke often of the importance of hope in the fight against cancer and that a person must have a healthy sense of mind, body, and spirit if they want to beat cancer. Dana-Farber Cancer Institute may be just one thing that gives people the hope they need to get by.