

MARCHING FOR A CURE



Christina Ryan, Calgary Herald

Sixteen-month-old Katherine Elder, with her mother Jennifer, was dressed in pink in support of her great-grandmother, who was among the nearly 200 cancer survivors who marched on Stephen Avenue on Tuesday.

Thinking pink offers hope

SUZANNE GOLDMAN
CALGARY HERALD

A teary-eyed procession of breast cancer survivors paraded along Stephen Avenue on Tuesday, flanked by street lamps and trees adorned with 432 pink ribbons meant to represent the number of breast cancer diagnoses made in Canada every week.

Nearly 200 survivors took part in the kickoff event, held at Bankers Hall, to launch the Think Pink breast cancer awareness week and to pro-

mote the CIBC Run for the Cure on Sept. 30.

The annual run raised nearly \$2 million in Calgary in 2006 and \$23 million across Canada.

Although survivors, not all the parade participants were cancer-free.

Just before Christmas in 2005, Gaydon Willis awoke covered in hives, an allergic reaction that cleared but left a red mark on her right breast.

Willis ignored the spot, but after several negative mammograms, she was diagnosed with breast cancer on Aug. 11, 2006.

"Never in a million years did I ever think anything like this would ever happen to me," she said.

Willis underwent a full mastectomy and the removal of 16 lymph nodes, but in October she was told the cancer had spread to her bones and was given a prognosis of four years.

For those facing cancer, coming face-to-face with survivors offers much-needed hope, said Heather Webber, co-director of the run.

The mother of three was diagnosed with breast cancer in

2000 after finding a lump in her right breast. A fitness buff and dancer, she underwent surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatments, but the cancer returned and spread to her bones and liver.

The 45-year-old was feeling too ill to walk the parade route this year, but it was important for her to be there.

"You need to see people who are well," she said. "It takes that little bubble of fear in your heart and replaces it with hope."

SGOLDMAN@THEHERALD.CANWEST.COM