

AIMEE'S STORY

INSPIRATION IS FOUND HERE



Aimee Parani with her husband, Chris, during an emotional ceremony Sunday. JASON TOWLEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cancer survivor moved by ceremony

By Cheryl Makin :: @CherylMakin

JACKSON — The moment that got to Aimee Parani took her by surprise.

Walking in the Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure Sunday at Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, Parani, 39, was taking the whole experience in. She got her first set of beads — a string given for every year of survival and participation — and she saw and spoke with other breast cancer survivors. She walked in her first “Survivor’s March” before the actual 4K walk.

“But when they played that song, ‘I’m Gonna Love You Through It’ by Martina McBride, and released the doves,” Parani said, “and the woman (Nancy Goodman Brinker) spoke about her sister (Susan B. Komen), I just lost it. That really got to me.”

Most of the day was not spent in tears, but watching the 20 birds fly — one for those who lost their battle with breast cancer and 19 to represent the survivors



Point Pleasant native Aimee Parani walks in Sunday's Race for the Cure. JASON TOWLEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SURVIVOR'S STORY

For a video from Sunday's Race for the Cure, visit <http://mycj.co/17d1TuR>.

— choked up not only Parani but also her family contingent of 11 as well.

Joining Parani was her husband, Chris; son, Gregory, 4; parents Millie and Paul Fraley; sister Kim Pope, brother-in-law Pat Pope and their triplets Marissa, Cathryn and Pat, 7. Rounding out the group was her 1-month-old daughter, Paige, in her carriage.

They were all part of the team put together by Parani's reconstructive surgeon, Dr. Robert Herbstman of Contemporary Plastic Surgery, with offices in East Brunswick and Red Bank.

“You don't know the moments that will hit you,” Chris Parani said. “This one did.”

Aimee Parani's mother teared up before the moment that got to her daughter. For Millie Fraley, it was watching what many consider the highlight of the day:

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Pandush Mitre of Wall watches Mike Keelen of Keansburg fill out a questionnaire. FRANK GALIPO/SPECIAL TO THE HOME NEWS TRIBUNE

Why do colleges take polls?

Monmouth, Rutgers among schools with research surveys

By Keith Sargeant @KSargeantGNJ

Leave it to Rutgers University political science professor David Redlawsk to explain why colleges are in the polling business.

“As a university, our mission is public service and education, so I think it's all worth everything we put into it for both of those purposes,” said Redlawsk, the director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers. “From a branding standpoint, it's generally a positive thing. Certainly the publicity doesn't hurt but for us it's more about educating our students about engaging people in research and providing a public service for the state.”

It's why universities throughout New Jersey have followed what the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll — the oldest statewide academic survey operation in the country — started 42 years ago with polling centers of their own.

From Fairleigh Dickinson University up north to Richard Stockton College down south and virtually every college in between, New Jersey schools have received plenty of headlines for their poll research as both the New Jersey gubernatorial race between

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Cold case discovery

By Susan Loyer @SusanLoyerMyCJ

Doreen Abode dreamed of spending her senior years sitting on the porch with her beloved older sister, Maryann Krepps, at her side. But her dream has been shattered.

After 15 years of searching for Krepps, who was last seen by her family in North Brunswick, her remains recently were returned to her family. Although her partial skull had been found on a New York Indian reservation in May of 1998, it took years to identify Krepps as the woman, whose



Maryann Krepps PHOTO COURTESY OF KREPPS FAMILY

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Gov to debate live on TV tonight

Buono/Christie sparring contest to be aired on CBS stations

By Bob Jordan @BobJordanAPP

TRENTON — During this summer's speculation that Gov. Chris Christie would not risk his status as frontrunner in the governor's race by debating Democrat Barbara Buono, Christie said, “The fact of the matter is that Barbara Buono's worst days of the campaign will be the days that I debate her.”

This evening, in the first gubernatorial debate, New Jerseyans will get to see if Christie set the bar too high for himself.

The Asbury Park Press and its sister papers in New Jersey are sponsoring the debate with partners William Paterson University,

which is hosting; The Record and Herald-News of Woodland Park, and WCBS television (Channel 2) in New York and KYW television (Channel 3) in Philadelphia, both of which are broadcasting the 60-minute debate live at 7 p.m.

John Schoonejongen, state editor for The Press and its sister papers, is on the panel of questioners along with Chris May of KYW and Alfred Doblin of The Record. Kristine Johnson of WCBS is the moderator.

Those in the Christie and Buono camps said the candidates have been busy preparing.

Former Gov. Jim Florio said it's an intensive process to get ready for such encounters.

“It's very hard work because you and your staffers are putting together anticipated responses to the anticipated questions. It's a lot of material,” said Florio, a Democrat who had three televised gubernatorial debates with Christine Whitman in 1993, two with Jim Courter in 1989 and three formal debates with Tom Kean in 1981. Florio won the election over Courter but lost to Kean and Whitman.

David Turner, Buono's campaign spokesman, said the long-time state legislator “is ready to clearly articulate her vision as

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AIMEE

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the Survivor's March. Breast cancer survivors adorned in their pink beads and garb walked behind banners announcing years of survival from the Survivor's Tent to the stage area. Local high school cheerleaders with pink bows, socks and poms poms lined both sides of the aisle cheering them on.

Parani asked her mother what got to her at the Race for the Cure, and her mother softly said, "You."

Ready for Thursday

After undergoing five months of chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer — all done while pregnant with her second child — Parani has chosen to undergo a bilateral mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. Both surgeries are to be done Thursday at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick.

"I really feel good. I am ready," Parani said. "I can't wait. I just want this

to be over. I'm ready to put myself in their hands and be home from the hospital."

Chris Parani said the coming days will be spent making sure Aimee keeps her positive attitude.

"She has never been negative, and we don't want that to change," said Chris Parani, who is planning a date night for his wife before the surgery. "We are just going to keep doing what we have been doing and keep her positive."

In turn, Aimee Parani credits her "amazing" support system of family and friends.

"I have the best," she said. "My husband has been there for me in every way. My parents — they had an empty nest — and took in their daughter — pregnant and with breast cancer — and her husband and 4-year-old child. Everybody has just been there for me. They have been incredible."

Walking with Dr. Herbstman

Walking in the 20th annual Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure was not on Parani's original itiner-

ary for October. It was Herbstman and his office who informed the Paranis of the event and asked if they wanted to join the team.

Herbstman has been participating in the event for 14 years and includes his office staff, patients and their families on his roster. He also pays for their registration.

"This year we had about 130 on our team," said Herbstman in the VIP tent. "We look forward to this every year. I used to run in it, but now I walk with my team."

Herbstman said that as a reconstructive surgeon, he often see patients at a point where they can feel depressed by their diagnosis.

"With a cancer diagnosis, we often see them at a point when they are really down," he said. "And to be with them over the years and to see people really bounce back, and get to a great level of thankfulness that they have survived and gotten to a great point in their lives."

"It's very nice. It makes going into medicine very rewarding."

Creating memories and traditions

For Parani and her family, this now will be a tradition for them — walking together. They were already talking about how, at next year's Race for the Cure, little Paige should be walking. This year, the newborn slept through the entire walk, pushed by Aimee's dad, Paul Fraley, and clasping the hand of her 7-year-old cousin Pat Pope.

Breast cancer is not foreign to Parani's family. Having tested positive for the BRCA2 gene, a hereditary precursor to breast cancer, Parani's family history has many others who have endured the disease. Both of her grandparents on her father's side had breast cancer, as did a great-aunt. Another uncle had prostate cancer. On her mother's side, a great-aunt had breast cancer, an uncle had leukemia and her grandmother had colon cancer. Of those who had breast cancer, only her grandfather, now 96 years old, survived.

"I was thinking about my grandma a lot," Parani said. "She died 33 years

ago."

While the event overall was a very positive experience for Parani, it also made her pause and think about the facts of the disease.

"Just look around, look how many have gotten breast cancer," she said. "It makes me sad to know how many are affected by this. I was looking at that group of women. There are eight women standing there talking. One of them will get breast cancer. The statistics say one in eight will be diagnosed with breast cancer. I can't help but think, 'Who is it going to be?'"

An inspiring day

An exuberant personality, no one in Aimee's family was surprised to see her happily chatting away with some new friends during the survivor's march. Shaking his head, her father said, "That's our Aimee. Always talking."

"This is so great," Parani said. "I really loved being able to talk to others. While we were standing waiting to do the survivor's march, we were talking. We were all com-

paring what happened. 'I had this, oh you had that?'" The people are amazing here."

Parani was equally impressed with the scope of the event, which saw more than 7,000 participating.

"They just do so much and give so much," she said. "I am amazed at everything — all the freebies and the handouts. The organization is incredible. All the people. I didn't think there would be so many people. This just blew me away."

For Aimee Parani, overall, the day simply inspired her.

"It gave me hope," she said.

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of stories documenting Aimee Parani's experiences with breast cancer. We will also update readers on her surgery experiences and recovery progress in subsequent installments. For previous stories, visit <http://mycj.com/1f3F300>.

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POLLS

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Gov. Chris Christie and Sen. Barbara Buono and the state Senate contest between Newark Mayor Cory Booker and Steve Lonegan heat up.

While every school has its own purpose for conducting surveys, most officials agree there are few negatives with engaging the public on issues that stimulate conversation and, in some cases, impact how policymakers govern.

"Our primary motivations are twofold," Redlawsk said. "One is a public service motivation — that is we think it is important for New Jerseyans to have some sense of what's going on in public opinion about policy and politics within the state. The second is our educational mission; that's why we involve students in every phase of the process so they have a better idea of how the polling process works."

Dan Douglas, director of the public policy institute at Richard Stockton College, said last month its Galloway-based school was mentioned 150 times in various media outlets due to its political polls.

"That doesn't happen in a typical month," Douglas said. "For us, it creates a great awareness about the college throughout the state, nationally and sometimes even internationally."

Other universities gain publicity by pursuing current events. Shortly after Superstorm Sandy hit last October, the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll surveyed residents about the storm, collecting data that found, according to school officials, a greater belief in global climate change and a desire for preventive measures in the face of future natural disasters.

Monmouth University, which has been widely lauded for its post-Sandy surveys, is in the midst of its most significant project involving New Jersey residents who were significantly impacted by the storm.

"We obviously take a measure of pride in our political polling but that's just one small piece of what we're all about," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth Polling Institute. "One of the things we're proudest of is our work with what's going on with Sandy recovery. We've had a lot of students trying to find out what the long-term impacts are, and the number of people impacted."

Is the five-figure price tag worth it?

Surveying the public typically comes at a significant cost, and only a

few schools take in money from private organizations or government agencies seeking independent research. (None of the schools interviewed for this story receive money from campaigns for their political surveys). The majority of schools outsource the task of telephoning people through random digit dialing, then collect and analyze the data before releasing the poll.

"It really depends on a huge number of factors, the number of people, whether it's a 10-minute survey or a 20-minute survey and the information we're going after," Redlawsk said of the cost. "Last year we did a question on tattoos, and that was easier because you don't have to screen for registered voters."

A recent Rutgers-Eagleton survey that found Christie with a 20-point lead over Buono, reportedly sampled 925 New Jersey adults through a telephone poll that included 782 land-line and 143 cell-phone calls. According to Redlawsk, a completed cell-phone interview can cost up to \$25 per person and roughly \$19 for landline users.

"This is very much ballpark," Redlawsk said, "but all you have to do is multiply it by (925) and you can see it adds up pretty quickly."

While an average phone survey can easily exceed \$15,000, officials say that price tag is worth it for the headlines it brings to a school.

"If you're a respected poll, it brings positive notice to the school, no question about it," said Mickey Carroll, director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. "A poll is an avenue to be known, but you can always buy ads. Beyond that, it's a respectable thing to do."

Benefits in branding

The Quinnipiac University Poll is considered the gold standard in the business, frequently lauded by USA Today and other national media organizations for its information and accuracy. While Carroll is widely known as the voice of the poll, routinely offering colorful and insightful opinions on tri-state political races, school President John Lahey is credited with the founding of the poll in the late 1980s.

"The example I like to use is when Doug Flutie completed that famous Hail Mary pass. All of a sudden, Boston College got on the map and so many other universities decided to put their money into their football programs," said Terry Golway, director of the Kean University Center for History, Politics and Poli-

cy. "In a similar way, Quinnipiac is the B.C. of college polling. No one had ever heard of Quinnipiac — no one knew how to spell it — and now all of a sudden Quinnipiac is mentioned by just about every major media outlet. To me, that is what is driving all of these other polls. It's about branding, it's about getting your name out there, it's about inserting yourself into the conversation about New Jersey politics."

Carroll conceded that point as well. "Obviously John Lahey did it to make Quinnipiac known but he's also a tremendous politics buff. It's not just an exercise in P.R.," he said. "Schools are in the knowledge business and the knowledge of how the election process and of what's happening is important."

While Rutgers has approximately 10 employees and a few dozen students working in its calling center, Quinnipiac is considerably larger than most other academic polling institutes. It's a seven-day-a-week operation that employs more than 150 students who serve as interviewers for the hundreds of surveys the school produces each year.

"I'll tell you when it turned around for us," Carroll said. "About three or four years ago people stopped writing 'a poll by Quinnipiac, a school in Hamden, Conn.,' and just simply wrote 'Quinnipiac.' In other words, the branding had taken effect."

The branding effect is what spurred schools like Kean and Stockton into the polling business as well.

"Frankly all these other polls are better known than ours," Golway said, "but I still think it's helped get the Kean brand out there."

Stockton has quickly emerged as a legitimate polling center thanks to its unique business model, its director said.

"I believe we're the only public college that has its own calling center run by students," said

Douglas, who last year opted to use the money it paid to an outside vendor to pay the 100 students working in the Stockton calling center.

"Educating our students on this research process is a big part of our mission, as is engaging with the South Jersey community and letting lawmakers know how they feel about certain issues."

Polling for the greater good

While Stockton's polls focus on both the major statewide and local legis-

lative elections, Monmouth's surveys often transcend politics.

"Right after Sandy hit, we went a month later with one of our polls, spending 25 minutes asking questions about what happened," Murray said. "It wasn't about politics at that point, it was about understanding the impact. Our job was to extract the pulse of what was going on at the time, and it was also to make a contribution to public life."

Founded in 2005, Monmouth's polling center takes on projects through a process that includes telephone interviews,

mail responses and in-person surveys. Once collected, Murray's team analyzes the data before releasing its findings for public consumption.

"I don't think there are too many universities that regret it as long as they do it well," Murray said.

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