

Tough Enough luncheon, fashion show draw crowd

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LAS CRUCES - A traffic alert might need to be issued in future years for NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough To Wear Pink (TETWP) events.

There has been a packed house at the Las Cruces Convention Center for three happenings tied to the annual campaign that raises money and public interest for cancer research. Friday's 29th annual Cowboys for Cancer Research Dinner and Dance was sold out, with about 750 people there.

A sellout crowd of 700 attended Wednesday's TETWP Women's Luncheon and Fashion Show, and if you didn't get there early you probably ended up having to park, and walk, some distance from the convention center.

That also meant a lot of people at TETWP's "Shop for the Cure" boutiques that stretched from one end of the convention center's main hallway to the other. If you were looking to get lost in a crowd Wednesday, the two TETWP events were perfect to accomplish that.

"This event has grown enormously," said Gov. Susana Martinez, who attended the luncheon and fashion show. "The first time drew about 200 people, then that grew to 400, and now to this. Because of that, I expect we'll see a sea of pink on Saturday."

That will be when results of this year's NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough To Wear Pink fundraising efforts will be announced, at halftime of the college football game between the

University of Idaho and New Mexico State University, at Aggie Memorial Stadium. Many residents - some who are even football fans - will wear pink and that "sea" will become particularly pronounced when the crowd at the game will be asked to stand if they or someone they know has been affected by breast cancer.

"It's pretty moving to be down on the field during that presentation and to look up and see all of the people standing," said Pat Sisbarro, who with Laura Conniff, Magellia Boston, and Mary Henson are co-chairs of the TETWP campaign. "Just about everyone in the stadium is on their feet."

The crowd at Wednesday's luncheon and fashion show spent a good amount of time on their feet. There was a profound sense of energy as standing ovations were given to all of the women models who are breast cancer survivors. Whether it was as short as six months ago that they were diagnosed or as long as 22 years ago, the crowd definitely let the survivors know just how appreciated they really are.

"It's an honor to have been asked to model with every one of these incredible women," said Janet Clements, who regularly models fashions for Emerald Isle.

Clements definitely fits into the category of those whose lives have been affected by cancer. She dabbed her eyes as she talked about her mother, who didn't survive cancer.

"Before I went out (Wednesday), I looked up and said 'this one's for you, Mom,' " Clements said.

The crowd stood as cancer survivors strutted their stuff up and down the catwalk, in the convention center's main ballroom. They clapped in time to the Bee Gee's "Stayin' Alive," a disco hit made famous in the movie "Saturday Night Fever."

The crowd, with women outnumbering men by six and maybe seven to one, worked itself into a frenzy when Las Cruces firefighters jumped on the catwalk and did their best imitations of Chippendales dancers. They returned for an encore, holding out empty fire boots, that didn't remain empty for very long.

People stuffed the boots with all kinds of cash. Organizers of the event said afterward that several 100-dollar bills were contributed.

With more than \$506,000 raised last year, the joint efforts of Cowboys for Cancer Research and NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough To Wear Pink made Las Cruces' events the number one fundraiser in the world for TETWP.

"With Cowboys for Cancer Research, we look forward to working with them and combining to become the number one event the world - again," Conniff said.

Geraldine Calhoun, with Cowboys for Cancer Research, said the nonprofit organization's partnership with NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough To Wear Pink remains strong, and the end result is that funds will continue to be raised to support endowments that have been established at the University of New Mexico Cancer Research Center, for 25 years, and at NMSU, which began earlier this year.

"There's no way we could have accomplished what we've been able to do without NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough To Wear Pink," Calhoun said. "We definitely will continue to support both endowments, the Alma Cohorn Memorial Cowboys for Cancer Research endowment, at UNM, and the endowment that has been established at NMSU."

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Coming up

Other events scheduled for the NMSU Aggies Are Tough To Wear Pink campaign include:

- Today: New Mexico State University student pep rally and bonfire. Information: (575) 646-4466
- Friday: NMSU Pink Happy Hour, 4 p.m., Corbett Center and NMSU's International Mall. Information: (575) 646-4466; O-ate High School vs. Las Cruces High School Tough Enough To Wear Pink football game, 7 p.m., Field of Dreams. Information: (575) 527-5800.
- Saturday: NMSU 5- and 10-kilometer Fun Run and Walk, 7 a.m., NMSU Horseshoe. Information: (575) 646-4466; University of Idaho Vandals vs. NMSU Aggies college football game, 6 p.m., Aggie Memorial Stadium. Information: NMSU Ticket Office, (575) 646-1420.
- Oct. 24: Tough Enough To Wear Pink Week begins at Mesilla Valley Christian School.
- Oct. 27: MVCS Tough Enough To Wear Pink volleyball game, MVCS gymnasium.
- Oct. 29: MVCS Tough Enough To Wear Pink high school football game, Gadsden High School.
- Nov. 4: Gadsden Tough Enough To Wear Pink football game, 7 p.m., Chaparral High School.

To donate

- To contribute to the NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough To Wear Pink campaign, make checks payable to: TETWP/Cowboys for Cancer Research, P.O. Box 202, Do-a Ana, NM 88032.
- For more information, call Geraldine or Denny Calhoun at (575) 526-6028.
- To make contributions online go to: www.pinkaggie.com and click on the "Contribute" link.