

PUBLICATION

City Spotlight: Comedy for a Cause Hits Close to Home for Knoxville Office

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In April of 2013, Knoxville attorney LeAnn Mynatt, an avid runner, was preparing to run the Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston, South Carolina, when she found herself having shortness of breath. After going to see a doctor in Charleston, LeAnn received some sobering news. She was diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer.

LeAnn immediately underwent surgery and then began six months of chemotherapy treatment to fight the cancer. And fight she did. So it should come as no surprise to those who know her that one year later, LeAnn finished the Cooper River Bridge Run, her hair a little shorter, but her spirit even brighter. "There were 18 of us. We ran it together, wearing teal in support of me, wearing baseball caps. We had a great time. We cried, we laughed, we celebrated and I was very, very happy to be back one year later doing the race I missed last year. It felt terrific," LeAnn told WATE reporter Lori Tucker in an interview on September 23, 2014.

When the Knoxville Office Women's Initiative met to discuss hosting a fundraising event in 2014, which cause to support was an easy decision. In honor of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, the event was scheduled for September. Teal invitations and flyers were sent out to promote the event because teal is the official color of the ovarian cancer cause. It was touted as an "Awareness Event" to raise awareness and education about not only ovarian cancer, but also uterine cancer and cervical cancer as well. These three types of cancers are known as the "Big 3" in the gynecologic cancer community.

And so, on Thursday, September 11, 2014, the Knoxville Women's Initiative hosted *Comedy for a Cause* in LeAnn's honor to raise money for gynecological cancer research and for patient needs. LeAnn served as the master of ceremonies for the event, which was put on in conjunction with UT Medical Center. The event sold out and was standing-room-only to a crowd of more than 240 attendees wearing teal as far as the eye could see. Fellow Baker Donelson attorney Jennifer Keller even made the trip down from Johnson City to support LeAnn and the event. There was a silent auction with items donated from local businesses all over Knoxville, including Ijams Nature Center, a Knoxville-based non-profit organization, where LeAnn served as a Board member at the time of her diagnosis.

The evening began with a meet-and-mingle cocktail hour and the silent auction. UT Medical Center set up an information booth for all guests to learn more about ovarian, cervical and uterine cancers and to make donations to support cancer research. LeAnn delivered a heartwarming welcome to all of the cancer survivors and their friends and families who were in attendance. LeAnn told the crowd about her story and her battle with cancer and then introduced her doctor, Dr. Larry Kilgore. Dr. Kilgore, Dr. Kristopher Kimball and LeAnn discussed ovarian, cervical and uterine cancers and their early warning signs. The headliner of the event was local comedian Leanne Morgan, who brought down the house with her southern charm and her self-described "Mom Comedy." At an event focusing on such a serious topic, Ms. Morgan was able to bring tears of laughter to the audience members' eyes as she discussed her country upbringing in East Tennessee and shared hilarious anecdotes about her penchant for wearing Spanx and her crazy teenage daughter. The event raised more than \$5,000 in donations, all going to benefit patient needs and gynecologic cancer awareness at UT Medical Center.

The event turned out to be a special night for everyone involved, but especially for those who have been personally affected by gynecologic cancer. It's rare when a first-time event exceeds everyone's expectations, and brings attention to such an important cause, but one thing is clear about next year's event – we are going to need a bigger venue!