

CARLSBAD: Cheerleaders make spirited plea for breast cancer awareness

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[Carlsbad High School](#) cheerleaders are supporting breast cancer [awareness](#) this month by wearing pink ribbons in their hair and hanging a large banner at football games displaying names of friends and family members who have been diagnosed with the disease.

More than half the school's 48 cheerleaders have family members or friends who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, cheer parent Traci O'Neill said.

O'Neill and her daughter, Brooklyn, made necklaces for the girls with pink ribbons and helped organize awareness activities.

O'Neill said her mother has had breast cancer for six years.

"The whole point isn't to raise money; it's to raise awareness in our community and show no one is alone in the fight," O'Neill said.

Cheerleaders gathered Monday to take photographs of the team holding pink signs with the names of loved ones who are in remission or still have breast cancer.

"When I think of cheerleaders, I think they're smart, loud and proud," O'Neill told the cheer squads Monday. "One of the best things to be in this fight is loud."

Kerry Langford, the cheer adviser and head coach, said the girls plan to distribute the pictures to their family members to show they are thinking about them.

Langford's grandmother was included in the names.

"It's a nice reminder of everyone who has suffered, but there is still so much hope," she said.

Sophomore Julia Haselhuhn said she prays every day for her cousin Petra, who is 29 years old and was diagnosed with breast cancer last month.

Haselhuhn's grandmother is also a breast cancer survivor.

"Once I found out, my heart just sank," she said of her cousin. "I don't know what I'd do if she wasn't here."

Madison McMurray, a freshman, said she was showing support for her mother's boyfriend, who was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago and is in remission.

"It was hard. We didn't know what was going to happen," she said. "I didn't even know men could get it. It's still scary. It's scary to think it could come back."

Brooklyn O'Neill said she wanted other members of the community to see the cheerleaders' signs and ribbons and take action.

"People don't want to go get checked, but they should," she said. "I love my grandma like crazy, and I'd hate to see her lose her life over this illness."