

Team Molly



Class of 2008 graduate honored by Lexington Girls Varsity Volleyball Team and L.H.S. Community

By Laurie Atwater

Girls volleyball games at Lexington High School don't usually pack the stands with spectators, but Lexington's game against Reading on September 25th was anything but usual. It was more than a game—it was a heartfelt and heartwarming tribute and show of support for Molly Eisenberg, 2008 L.H.S. graduate and former captain of the varsity volleyball team. The event was called *Volley for Molly* and it was quite a night!

Eisenberg was diagnosed with ovarian cancer only one week into her freshman year at the University of Oregon. On game night, hundreds gathered in the Lexington gymnasium to support Molly in her battle, and to raise funds for ovarian cancer awareness programs. Molly was able to watch the game live from the west coast over the internet thanks to a live feed set-up by LexMedia.

"I think what moved me most about this experience was the generosity of the kids," comments Diane Murphy, mother of current volleyball team co-captain Meaghan Murphy. Murphy and other parent volunteers mobilized to organize this event with their daughters on short notice. "My daughter Meaghan sent out an invitation on Facebook," she explains. "Within the first hour 56 people had responded and after a few hours they had

hundreds of replies.

Meaghan and co-captain Emily Wiederhold collaborated with Coach Jane Bergin to organize this impressive evening. In just under two weeks the team changed the color of their uniforms to teal (the color that is used to promote ovarian cancer awareness), reached out to dozens of local businesses for donations and raffle items and coordinated publicity for the event. Their hard work and passion for their friend and teammate culminated in an event that looked as though it had taken months to organize.

"It started as a 'little volleyball game,'" Murphy says. "We were blown away by the response and the momentum kept going from there." The entire L.H.S. community—athletic director and coaches, administrators, custodians, police, teachers, and students—all pitched in according to Murphy.

Everyone in the larger community got



Photos clockwise top to bottom: Coach Bergin thanks the crowd and her team and sends well-wishes to Molly (pictured above right) who was watching a live stream at home over the internet. The girls Varsity Volleyball team prepare to *Volley for Molly*. A standing-room-only crowd surrounded by teal balloons gathered to honor and support Molly.

into the spirit as well. Dozens of Lexington businesses stepped up with merchandise and financial donations for the event. Students purchased teal bracelets to demonstrate their solidarity, and everyone demonstrated their generosity by purchasing raffle tickets and concessions. Coaches from all disciplines crowded into the gym until there was standing room only

as the balloon festooned bleachers filled with supporters.

"People were jammed in wherever they could find a seat," Murphy says. "The energy and enthusiasm at the game was exhilarating."

Coach Bergin addressed the crowd, thanked them for their support and expressed love and admiration for Molly on behalf



Photos above and below: Volunteers staffed the tables where dozens of local businesses and individuals had contributed items for a raffle to raise money for ovarian cancer charities. Hundreds of students, parents and L.H.S. staff turned out to support *Volley for Molly*.



of the team. In what was a very touching moment, team members stood silently wearing teal armbands and looking to each other for support.

As a teammate and leader, Molly was known for her ability to mentor others and provide encouragement. She was awarded the *Team Award* her junior year for her all-around spirit and love of the game. The entire volleyball community has rallied to the cause and many teams have raised funds in other communities to contribute to *Volley for Molly*.

Off the volleyball court Molly is loved by her classmates, many of whom returned to Lexington from college to be at the game and to honor her. Her Lexington friends and classmates have kept in contact with her during

her illness. "Molly is an amazing girl," one of her friends says, "I've never met anyone like her."

At the entrance to the gym, a table was staffed by volunteers from *Ovations for the Cure of Ovarian Cancer*. They distributed information about ovarian cancer and sold teal bracelets to support the cause. Increasing awareness for ovarian cancer, which is often called a "silent killer", is very important to Molly and her family.

There are more than 30 different types of ovarian tumors, which are categorized according to cell type. Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of death from cancer in women and the leading cause of death from gynecological cancer according to the

"Anyone who was there that night had to be moved by the love and support in that gym."

Diane Murphy, mother of team co-captain Meaghan Murphy and one of the parent organizers of Volley for Molly.

American Cancer Society.

Too often it is assumed that young women cannot acquire ovarian cancer. This is not the case. Molly was diagnosed with germ cell ovarian cancer. Germ cell ovarian tumors are aggressive tumors seen most often in young women or preteen and adolescent girls. If detected and treated early, they are generally curable. However, like other ovarian cancers, ovarian germ cell tumors can be difficult to diagnose early. This is especially significant for young girls and adolescents who have yet to have a complete gynecologic examination.

The vague gastrointestinal symptoms like stomach upset, bloating, gas or pressure that go along with this disease may be confused with other less serious digestive issues or even menstrual discomfort, but if they persist for more than two weeks they should be checked out. The primary telltale symptom is swelling in the abdomen. The belly may be hard and/or distended, but may not feel painful at all. When this swelling occurs without overall weight gain, it is cause for concern. Girls may try unsuccessfully to diet or exercise, but the swelling persists and they should see a doctor. [See sidebar for complete list of ovarian cancer symptoms]. A pap test does NOT detect ovarian cancer.

Girls and women with a family history of breast and ovarian cancers should pay special attention, and young women in families with the BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 mutations should be vigilant. Currently, there are no effective tests for early detection, but many symptoms are known to occur early in the disease, so it is important to seek medical attention. Only 25% of cases are diagnosed early before the cancer has spread to the pelvic region. For these women, the 5-year survival rate is 90%.

According to Murphy, *Volley for Molly* raised almost \$15,000 for ovarian cancer foundations that provide education and support for patients and their families. Additionally Coach Bergin and the volleyball team are being honored by the M. Patricia Cronin Foundation with their annual *Prevention Award* this month at their annual Ovarian Cancer Anniversary Benefit. The volleyball team hopes to make *Volley for Molly* an annual event.

Though Reading won the game, the Lexington team played their hearts out for their friend, and the entire Lexington community

sent their love out to Molly and her family on that Friday night.

*Sadly, we learned at press time that Molly has passed away. Molly was a courageous young woman who inspired her friends and the larger community with her generosity, spirit and strength. She will live forever in the hearts of those who were privileged to know her. Details about a memorial service were unavailable at press time. If you would like to send a message to the Eisenberg family, visit: www.ovationsfortheure.org/guestbookMolly (see below). You can also make a donation to **Volley for Molly** in Molly's memory, through the website.*



In 2005, 19,842 women in the U.S. learned they had ovarian cancer, and 14,787 women died from the disease.

OVARIAN CANCER SYMPTOMS

- Abdominal swelling with or without pain
- Bloating and/or an early feeling of fullness when eating
- Persistent, gastrointestinal complaints such as gas, nausea and indigestion
- Frequency and/or urgency of urination
- Change in bowel habits
- Unexplained weight loss or gain
- Unusual fatigue, backaches
- Abnormal or postmenopausal bleeding

LEARN MORE

OVATIONS FOR THE CURE
www.ovationsfortheure.org

OVARIAN CANCER NATIONAL ALLIANCE
www.ovariancancer.org

[this site offers a symptoms diary if you feel that you may have symptoms of ovarian cancer, keeping a diary will help your doctor to make an accurate diagnosis.]

MAYO CLINIC
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/ovarian-cancer>

JOHNS HOPKINS
<http://pathology2.jhu.edu/ovca>

OVARIAN CANCER INSTITUTE
<http://ovariancancerinstitute.org>