

# KEEPING FRIENDS AFLOAT (KFA)



The KFA program started in the Spring of 2009 to commemorate two remarkable mothers who lost courageous battles against breast cancer. Amanda Ash's mother, Diana, passed away on August 29, 2008. Emma Lightner's mother, Laurie, passed away on February 26, 2009. Both women were a central part of the Columbia Swim Club family. KFA efforts initially sought to raise funds in support of the Susan G. Komen Foundation and Columbia Swim Club, with sales of t-shirts and local fundraising efforts spearheaded by the two daughters, Amanda and Emma.



Since that time, KFA has taken on a life of its own. The outpouring of community support, corporate involvement, Columbia Swim Club passion and interest from other swimmers and parents nationwide has encouraged the continuation of the KFA program for the benefit of all.

This year, the Keeping Friends Afloat program will be contributing to the American Diabetes Association in honor of **Jim Devine, one of CSC and swimming's biggest supporters** who passed away this year. Once again, one-half of the proceeds will go to the local chapter of the **American Diabetes Association** and one-half will go to the KFA Scholarship fund. The KFA Scholarship is available to CSC families who have had financial hardship as a result of medical bills or unexpected financial hardships.

The stories of the two mothers who inspired this program are below. Thank you to all who have made this program a great success!

## DIANA ASH 1965-2008

Diana Jo Ash, 43, of Columbia, Missouri ended her courageous battle with breast cancer on Friday, Aug. 29, 2008, at her home with her family at her side. Which included Brian her husband of 15 years and their two children Amanda Leigh, age 11, and Alex William, age 9.

During Diana's 41/2- year battle with breast cancer, she became an advisory board member for the local Mid Missouri Susan G. Komen for the Cure affiliate. She served as an advocate on numerous fundraising committees, including Passionately Pink and the Hunt for the Cure. These fundraisers efforts raised more than \$100,000 for the foundation to help find a cure for breast cancer. Diana's battle touched many lives and provided hope and inspiration to those with this terrible disease.

In May 2007, Diana was honored as a local hero by the mid-Missouri Komen affiliate, “I certainly don’t look like Spiderman or Superman, and I actually had to look up hero in the dictionary,” Diana told the Missourian when she received her award. Director of the mid-Missourian Komen affiliate Elizabeth Mendenhall said Mrs. Ash was “a wonderful volunteer who helped build support in the community.”

“She was a positive person,” Mendenhall said. She was everybody’s friend.”

“Rather than looking at her disease as “woe is me,” she had a very positive outlook on everything,” Brian Ash said “She handled it with grace and dignity.

Diana and Brian married on Sept. 18, 1993. Brian, a former Sixth Ward councilman, and Mrs. Ash have owned and operated Bambino’s Italian Café on Hitt Street for the past 14 years. Mrs. Ash would work the door, saying hi to everyone who walked in and greeting people with a big smile. “She was the good will ambassador of the Ahs family,” Brian said.

## *Laurie Anne Lightner 1963-2009*

Laurie Anne Lightner passed away peacefully Thursday, Feb. 26, 2009 in her home after a three year battle with breast cancer. She was a dedicated employee for the Columbia Public School system for 13 years and worked at Rockbridge High School as a nurse’s Secretary.

Laurie Lightner will be remembered for her beautiful smile and personality, love of family and friends, and everlasting strength.

Not only was Laurie a dedicated staff member at Rockbridge High School, but she was also a devoted and loving mother to her three loving children, Matthew, who graduated from Rockbridge in 2004, and two daughters, Taylor, a junior at Rockbridge and Emma, a seventh grader at Gentry Middle School. She loved attending soccer games, dance competitions and swim meets for her three children. She was married to Timmothy Lightner for 24 years.

Laurie lived her life in a way that was an inspiration to others. “She showed people around her how to live life to the fullest and showed us how to be happy even in times when she was not feeling well,” Mrs. Ritter said. “I always saw her smiling and exuding a happiness. I think her biggest legacy is how to live life well; how to live ever day well. She was patient and kind and enjoyed every day. I know she wanted to be here every day for her kids and every day was precious to her, and she did that; she lived every day to the fullest and that’s what I’ll remember the most about her.”

