

# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

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## Cancer warriors unite : Survivors and supporters to turn out for second Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in SB

By DAVE MASON News-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Don't call Jessica Berman a survivor.

"I consider myself a cancer warrior," said Mrs. Berman, 35, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010 when she was six months pregnant. "I don't feel I just survived. It has the connotation of a victim to it. I really have been fighting for the last year."

Today, she feels good about being cancer-free. Her battle consisted of four rounds of chemotherapy during three months in late 2010, a radical mastectomy April 18, and nearly seven weeks of radiation treatment in June and July. She said she took someone's advice and approached the battle like a marathon - and won. Today, "they see no evidence of the disease," she said.

Plus, she gave birth Dec. 17 to Leo, a healthy and happy boy.



Mrs. Berman will do a victory lap - a 39.3-mile one - as she participates in and speaks at the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, which returns for its second consecutive year in Santa Barbara Sept. 17 and 18. The walk, one of nine such events across the U.S., begins 6:30 a.m. Sept. 17 at the Chase Palm Park soccer field, 236 E. Cabrillo Blvd., and will conclude 3 p.m. Sept. 18 at Carpinteria State Beach, 5361 Sixth St., in Carpinteria. Mrs. Berman will briefly address the crowd at the opening ceremony.

"I was diagnosed, while six months pregnant, with stage 3C, an aggressive form of cancer," the stay-at-home mom and former equity associate told the News-Press by phone from the Brentwood home she shares with husband David. "But I did not see it as a death sentence."

Mrs. Berman credited advancements in chemotherapy, which she was able to do in her third trimester of pregnancy, for helping her. The Avon Foundation for Women funds research for improvements in treatments, and last year's walk raised \$6.4 million, walk program director and breast cancer survivor Eloise Caddiago told the News-Press by phone from her New York City office.

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That's up from the \$4.6 million raised in 2009 when the walk took place in Los Angeles, Ms. Caddiago said. "We had more than 2,800 participants. We had a very nice increase. A lot of people were excited to try Santa Barbara. We were totally pleased with the outcome."

Among the walkers were rocker Fergie and actor husband Josh Duhamel. Fergie presented the walk's checks to various cancer organizations and research groups.

Ms. Caddiago stressed that most of the money raised stays in Southern California. Last year, the Avon Foundation gave a \$100,000 grant to the Cancer Center of Santa Barbara to start a patient navigation program, in which an advocate works with breast cancer clients on medical, financial and counseling decisions, and a \$25,000 grant to the Breast Cancer Resource Center of Santa Barbara for education and outreach, she said.

"Over time, we have raised \$32 million in Southern California," Ms. Caddiago said. "It's used for a variety of things: research, access to care, better treatment, nutrition programs for breast cancer patients, patient navigation programs. Ultimately, we're looking for a cure."

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## **IF YOU GO**

The 39.3-mile Avon Walk for Breast Cancer will take place Sept. 17 and 18 in Santa Barbara. Opening ceremonies will be at 6:30 a.m. Sept. 17 at the Chase Palm Park soccer field, 236 E. Cabrillo Blvd. The route will take walkers on sidewalks and recreational bike lanes by beaches and through neighborhoods from Chase Palm Park to the Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club in Carpinteria and finally to Carpinteria State Beach.

Closing ceremonies will be 3 p.m. Sept. 18 at Carpinteria State Beach, 5361 Sixth St., Carpinteria.

To participate, walkers must raise a minimum of \$1,800.

For more information, call Avon Walk for Breast Cancer at 888-540-WALK (9255) or go to [www.avonwalk.org](http://www.avonwalk.org).