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Woman who has cancer joining UK motorcycle tour to raise funds

By BRANDON LAUSCH
Staff Writer

When talking to Tracy Pleva Hill, one could get the impression that she not only wants to beat breast cancer for as long as she can, but she also wants to smack it with a sledgehammer, punt it with steel-toed boots and tear to it shreds.

"I just want to enjoy life the way everybody should enjoy life. I'm still here," said Hill, a 39-year-old Raritan Township resident who battles with Stage IV -- or metastatic -- breast cancer, the most advanced stage of the disease. "I think the hardest thing to do is find the joys and pleasures and continue to live your life through the disease. You don't know when the disease is going to take you ... but I'm claiming my life. If cancer wants to claim my life it's got to fight me for it. And it is."

This August, Hill will have another chance to tell the disease who's boss when she embarks on a weeklong motorcycle tour of the United Kingdom with 19 other women living with breast cancer. The first day of the trip -- which will take the riders from Aviemore, Scotland, to London -- will mark Hill's 40th birthday.

The ride is organized by a peer adventure group for women with breast cancer, called Amazon Heart Thunder, which aims to generate money for breast cancer organizations and raise awareness of breast cancer issues, according to the group.

Harley-Davidson sponsors the organization's rides -- after the UK tour, there will be two separate trips in the United States and Australia -- by donating riding jackets and loaning brand new motorcycles for each rider. In exchange, riders must pay registration and travel fees while also committing to raise \$1,500 for breast cancer causes.

Hill said her money is earmarked for the Young Survival Coalition, a nonprofit network of breast cancer survivors that "seeks to educate the medical, research, breast cancer and legislative communities and to persuade them to address breast cancer in women 40 and under," according to the organization.

Hill, a medical public relations director, said the group continues to raise awareness that young women do get breast cancer, despite the popular belief that it is an older woman's disease.

Even when Hill approached her longtime doctor with a lump in her right breast at the age of 32, it wasn't until six months later when he sent her for an ultrasound, after first dismissing the growth as a plugged duct due to the breastfeeding of her newborn, Jason.

Seven years later, Hill continues to fight the disease while spreading her story, even participating in a DVD produced by the Young Survival Coalition called "The Beautiful Eight," about eight women living with metastatic cancer.

As she continues to raise funds for her upcoming trip, Hill said she is growing increasingly excited as she prepares for the time of her life.

"It's an opportunity a lot of people will never have," she said. "I just want to have fun and be a part of something that does build awareness. It's a great combination of just fabulous, fabulous fun and a real reason. There's a point to this."

"It's perfect," she said.

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JEFF HILL/COURIER NEWS

Tracy Pleva Hill, who has breast cancer, will be riding her motorcycle along with 19 other women through Scotland to raise money for cancer.

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