

S.A. LIFE

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Tuesday in S.A. Life

Racing for a cure

Komen race participants share their stories of why they run

Who: Jeffrey Young, 54, and Olga Young, 52

Why they're walking: To honor Olga's six years as a breast-cancer survivor

Olga never paid much attention to the Susan G. Komen San Antonio Race for the Cure until she saw the TV commercials while lying in bed, resting from the chemotherapy she was undergoing for her breast cancer.

"I decided, 'As soon as I get well, I'm going to do that,'" says Olga, whose cancer was diagnosed in 2002. "I didn't know how much I'd be able to do but I wanted to go."

So she and her husband, Jeffrey, signed up for the 2004 event. With Olga still weak from the aggressive treatments, they walked ... and rested ... and walked some more, reaching the finish line accompanied by their pastor, another breast cancer patient.

"It was just a beautiful experience," Olga says. "It was so fulfilling to be in that group of ladies going through the same thing."

Olga's bout with cancer also inspired her to open the SLEW Wellness Center in 2004. The nonprofit organization helps low-income uninsured and underinsured women with cancer get the care they need after treatment, from wigs and prosthetics to counseling and massage therapy.

Each year, the Youngs bring a contingent of women served by the center to the event. They walk together as the SLEW Wellness Center team.

"They need that bonding experience too, so I make it a point of taking a group of newly diagnosed patients with me so they can see they're not alone," Olga says.

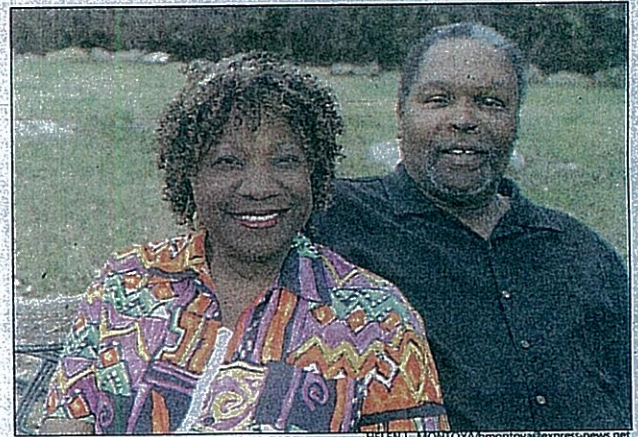
"They get a big rush out of it. It's a lot of crying and a lot of tears when they go out there for the first time, because it is a very touching experience."

The Youngs' 21-year-old daughter, Ashley, will walk with them. Their other daughter, Shannon, 26, participates in the Komen

race in New Orleans, where she lives.

For Jeffrey, who recalls a time when people didn't want to talk about "the big C," the race is an annual opportunity to support not only his wife but also the thousands of other survivors in a joyous atmosphere.

"It's always great to go out to the race. You see a lot of friends," Jeffrey says. "It's a big party. It's a celebration of life."



HELEN L. MONTROYA/hmontoya@express-news.net

Olga Young and husband Jeffrey first joined the Race for the Cure in 2004, even though Olga was still weak from treatments for breast cancer.