

# Long Island Nonprofit Kayak Outing Honors Those Touched by Breast Cancer

BY JULIA MORO - JULY 15, 2019



*Martha's Kayak, Inc. hosted its second annual memorial kayaking event this weekend in Island Park on Saturday, July 13, 2019.*

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Martha's Kayak, Inc. hosted its second annual memorial kayaking event this weekend in Island Park for breast cancer survivors, fighters, their families, and the families of those who lost a loved one to the horrific disease.

Roger Leider started the organization after his wife, Martha Leider, passed away in 2017 from metastatic breast cancer at age 54. She loved kayaking and visiting the swans she would frequently feed during her trips. Fifty people came together Saturday to kayak with the memory of Martha in their hearts, in hopes of seeing her beloved swans.

"I hate the reason that I do this, but I love that I can do it," said Leider. "When you're a breast cancer survivor, or you're undergoing treatment, it's not easy. To be able to have a couple of hours like this where you're smiling and having fun, it's a pretty cool thing to do for people."

The kayaking, nature, and support shown by others going through the same challenges was said to be very therapeutic for many that attended. Erin Nau, the counseling and education coordinator at Adelphi University, knew Martha through the support group she facilitated for metastatic breast cancer patients.

“[Kayaking] brought something so special to her, it was something she and Roger did a lot together, because Roger loved her so much,” said Nau. “This was Martha’s self care.”

Leider describes his wife as a strong, smart, and loving woman. Martha was an avid photographer, lover of animals, gym fanatic, and mother of two.

“The first time [kayaking] without her was tough,” said Leider. “But now it’s great that I come down here with friends, doing something she loved.”

The organization’s mission is to provide kayaking experiences for people that are either survivors or under treatment for any type of cancer, but specifically breast cancer. Any funds the nonprofit collects is put toward kayaking events for cancer survivors.

Leider has contacted Stony Brook Hospital, as well as the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to expand the organization and put together other kayaking excursions in those areas. Leider has also reached out to Memorial Sloan Kettering and Northwell Health, two hospitals his wife was treated at, to get a similar event in Suffolk County.

Jeanne Domborwski, a friend of Roger’s and a breast cancer survivor who participated in the kayaking excursion says that the insidious disease has definitely taken its toll on Long Islanders.

“It’s affected too many lives, and ruined too many families, especially on Long Island,” said Domborwski.

Now that the group has gotten their not-for-profit status, Leider hopes the organization will expand.

“I would love to grow this nationally,” said Leider. “We’re just starting to scratch the surface.”

Martha’s cousin, Sandy Krameisen, recalled how loving and caring Martha was. She remembered how Leider’s kids would call her ‘mama bear.’ The day was special for Krameisen to remember her cousin but also to support others.

“It’s nice for [survivors] and people that are going through treatment to feel supported,” said Krameisen. “For those of us who maybe are not going through that, it’s good to feel like you’re helping in some way, or learning what you can do to help a little bit more.”

Leider has big plans for the organization, all in memory of his wife.

“It’s good to keep her memory alive,” said Leider. “That’s why we do it.”

Julia Moro