

TAMMIE KOOI - 2011 HONORARY SURVIVOR CHAIR



Tammie Kooi is the 2011 Honorary Survivor Chair for the 22nd annual Komen Quad-Cities Race for the Cure.

Kooi was married, working and the mother of a 4-year-old boy in the spring of 1990 when she found a lump in her breast. A mammogram led to a biopsy, and the cancer was found to be malignant.

"It was pretty aggressive, and that alarmed me," she said. She chose treatment at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City and underwent surgery where doctors removed the breast, as well as diseased lymph nodes. Six months of chemotherapy treatments followed in Iowa City. The month after she finished chemotherapy, two more lumps were found along the scar lines. One was removed in a subsequent surgery, but the second lump was more problematic.

Kooi didn't know anyone else who had breast cancer at the time she had it, certainly no one near her 27-year-old age. In the 1991, she went to the Race for the Cure event on Arsenal Island with her sister and four friends. "It was an emotional roller-coaster kind of day," she said. It was an almost overwhelming experience to see all the other women who battled the disease. She's been involved with race ever since. Kooi organized a bus trip to Race for the Cure in 1997 and now transports up to 120 people from the Camanche area to the race in Moline. They meet in the parking lot of the town's bowling alley early on Saturday morning and return to the bowling alley to have a potluck lunch after the race. "Some women who have been doing my bus ride for years have become breast cancer survivors themselves," Kooi said.

Tammie has remained healthy since her breast cancer diagnosis 21 years ago. She has a big new dog, a 110-pound yellow Labrador retriever. "He's my personal trainer as far as walking every day goes," she said. She also tries to eat a healthy diet and volunteers for causes, including fundraising for research to find cures for breast cancer and muscular dystrophy. She raises money for the Komen Quad-Cities affiliate, including a bowling fundraiser. She also works with Reach for Recovery, an American Cancer Society initiative.

Kooi's son — a toddler during her cancer treatments — is now 25 years old and lives and works in Davenport. In their spare time, Kooi and her husband, Richard, love to boat on the Mississippi River.

"I like to stay active, and I try to stay involved," she said.