The Wall Street Journal

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit http://www.djereprints.com.

http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303985504579206000468304022

NY HEARD & SCENE

Stepping Into the Ring Against Cancer

Dozens of amateur boxers went toe-to-toe for Haymakers for Hope, a charity that hosts fights and funds cancer research.

By REBECCA BRATBURD
Nov. 18, 2013 4:29 p.m. ET

More than two dozen white collar boxers made their debuts in the ring on Thursday night in Midtown, all united by a will to knock out cancer.

Participants in Haymakers for Hope—a charity that raises funds to find a cure for the disease by hosting boxing matches—gave up blood, sweat and tears during the required four-month training, which culminated in matches of up to three rounds at the Hammerstein Ballroom.

There, officially-registered amateur fighters—who up until Thursday night were mostly hobbyists—brought their mightiest punches, called haymakers, to their first U.S.A. Boxing-sanctioned matches.

They also brought their fundraising prowess. Throughout the process, the boxers convinced people to donate a grand total of $593,000, said charity co-founders Julie Kelly and Andrew Myerson.

Participants could donate to the cancer charity of their choice or to Haymakers for Hope, which will then route the funds to charities such as The Jimmy Fund, which supports Boston’s Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and various other cancer research hospitals and facilities.

"Refs always say that when the bell rings, you're done, but for people fighting cancer, there's no bell," said Ms. Kelly, a survivor of Hodgkins lymphoma and former New York Golden Gloves champion. "You gotta keep swinging."

Some boxers, such as Macy Tanking, 35, fought for friends and family. Ms. Tanking said she dedicated her match to a two-time cancer survivor she has known since college.

"I have her in my heart and I have her name written in my gloves," said Ms. Tanking, who works in advertising technology. "Every time I don't want to go to the gym or I don't want to run, she's definitely an inspiration to keep me focused."

Other participants, such as Steve Reynolds, 53—along with all of the ring girls—were survivors themselves. Mr. Reynolds, a software marketer, and his opponent, Stuart Goldfarb, 59, a marketing advisor, collectively raised about $45,000.
Mr. Reynolds, whose father was a semi-professional boxer, said the experience was thrilling and emotional. While in the ring, he said he had memories of boxing with his friends as a teenager and of being in the hospital for treatment of his own head and neck cancer. He was diagnosed in 2007, several years after his son, Tyran, was born.

Ben Levine, 28, who works in real estate development, said everything that happened outside of the ring—the commitment to months of training and fundraising—was more important than the outcome of the actual fights. After knocking out his opponent, Mr. Levine recalled the advice given to him by his coach, Paul Nicholas of Mendez Boxing.

“When I was tired, [Mr. Nicholas] said to make hell feel like home,” Mr. Levine said. “That’s what he said and that’s what it was for months. It was an amazing experience, but there was a lot of sacrifice.”

Bill “Sweet Willie” Norberg, 33, who works in technology sales, was matched with Louis “Big Sweet” LaValle, 30, who works in hedge fund sales. Even after winning the tough match, Mr. Norberg said he would likely return to work in the morning without taking a day off.

“We’ll see how many post-fight cocktails there are,” Mr. Norberg said with a laugh. “That’ll dictate whether I go into work tomorrow. Fortunately I can say that.”

**Corrections & Amplifications**

The correct age of Ben Levine, who participated in a Haymakers for Hope event on Nov. 14, is 28. A Nov. 18 article incorrectly gave his age as 33.