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Article: **March to Beat the Big C**

March to beat the big C

By walkathon standards, it wasn't much. But every step taken on the 3.6 km route, by over 4,000 participants this morning, was one foot forward in the battle to defeat breast cancer

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DUBAI This morning, while the rest of Dubai were either deep in slumber or whiling away the weekend morning in the cozy confines of their homes, humanity witnessed a brave celebration of a spirit and will to overcome any odds in life. It happened in the form of Pink Walkathon, right here in the city, where over 4,000 men, women and children showed up to be part of the walk to raise awareness against breast cancer, where every step was taken to save a life.

The annual Pink Walkathon was being held for the third year in a row and is part of the Safe & Sound campaign for breast cancer awareness organised by Burjuman Centre, in its ninth edition this year.

By 7.30 a.m. the stretch outside the mall resembled a sea of bobbing pink heads as Dubai residents assembled to get ready for the event. According to the organisers, the turnout today was nearly double the number of partic-

ipants at last year's walkathon.

The event started close to 8.30 a.m. with the releasing of hundreds of pink balloons and the walkers were joined and entertained by Dubai Drums, a local percussion performing group.

Moroccan Sabri Zakaria was the first to complete the walk in a mere 15 minutes. "I would have finished sooner but I thought I would walk this one out to begin with. Halfway through, however, I began to gain pace, left my group behind and began running," laughed the seasoned runner who has participated in marathon events in Morocco and Dubai.

Zakaria was participating in the breast cancer walkathon for the first time and he said he was doing it for two reasons. "The first is to show my support for all those people who are cancer patients and the second is to help spread awareness about how others can save themselves from this dangerous disease," said Zakaria who works in the Food and Beverage department at the Radis-

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For Dubai, the city that cares, the Pink Walkathon this morning was another step towards a noble cause. (Shamnad)

son SAS hotel.

Several participants also brought along their children. Briton Monika Lamb was accompanied by her one-year-old girl twins, Tanya and Mia. "My mother-in-law suffered from breast cancer but she was a survivor. This cause is especially close to my heart

for that reason and when I heard about the event from my friends, I decided to come and bring my girls along," said Lamb.

In a lighter vein, Bev Mileham, Lynne Day, Natalie Ah Sing and Linda Van Der Walt were walking their first breast cancer walkathon this morn-

ing and were geared up for a good time. "I'm here for the pink cap and shirt," laughed Walt. "And the sunshine and exercise opportunity," added Mileham.

Ditto for the Decort family who were out to have some quality time while supporting a noble cause. "My wife con-

vinced me to sign up for the event so here we are," said Bart Decort who was accompanied by his wife Gabrielle and his children, five-year-old Elliot and two-year-old Liam.

All along the walk, medical teams and police officials were on duty, and patrolled the crowd as they made their

way on the designated 3.6-km route. The walk ended with a breakfast for the participants at Burjuman Centre accompanied by jazz music.

Sabina Khandwani, Head of PR and Marketing for Burjuman Centre and the brains behind the Safe & Sound campaign said that the walkathon was a unifying thread for the community. "Next year we plan to expand the campaign to a year-round exercise instead of focusing on the cause only in the month of October. We have had tremendous support from corporate organisations, civil services and government ministries for the event."

Khandwani's inspiration for the campaign came from the loss of her mother to breast cancer. "We couldn't save her because it was detected very late. That's why I hold this campaign so dear to my heart because we want to let women know that this is a curable cancer. Survival rates increase with early detection and therefore women must take the effort to protect themselves," said Khandwani.

All proceeds from the event will be channelled towards the Breast Cancer Foundation of the Emirates. According to recent reports from the ministry, breast cancer accounts for more than 27 per cent of cancers afflicting UAE women.