

Bleeker singer to fire the starting gun for Race for Life

A courageous Edinburgh singer who was diagnosed with breast cancer at 29 will start the Race for Life at South Queensferry on Sunday.

Lauren Alari, who has supported top Scottish acts like Eddie Reader, will sound the horn to start the Race at Hopetoun House – after performing with her band Bleeker on stage.

The 31 year-old was diagnosed with breast cancer in April 2011 and after successful treatment Lauren is feeling fighting fit. The Portobello lass can't wait to bring her on stage sparkle to help kick off the Race for Life.

She will be joined by Nicola Parrish who is set to become the first woman in the UK to take on a Race for Life every weekend during the three month season of inspiring women-only events. Nicola, from Colsterworth, kicks off her Race challenge at Hopetoun House.

Organisers have smashed the target this year with 1448 women taking part in the 5k and 10k events to raise money for Cancer Research UK's pioneering work, making it the biggest ever Race for Life event at Hopetoun House.

Among the sea of women will be many who have survived cancer themselves or are running in memory or celebration of loved ones whose lives has been touched by the disease.

Professional singer Lauren performs in acclaimed Edinburgh band Bleeker with partner Harris and they'll be performing at the Race for Life before Lauren sets off with 1051 women on the 5k course.

This year Lauren will celebrate being three years cancer free at Race for Life and she can't wait to mark the milestone by singing her heart out on stage and then crossing the finishing line with mum Pam, 57 and her partner Harris's daughter Robyn, 15.

Every year around 4,600 women are diagnosed with breast cancer in Scotland and less than 20 (or around 0.5%) of these women are in their 20's.*

Lauren never imagined she would experience an illness like cancer in her 20s. And that's why she is determined to support Cancer Research UK at Race for Life.

She said: "I was only 29 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer so it was a real shock. I didn't expect to go through something like that at my age. But I think you find ways to work around it and just get on with life."

Lauren had surgery in June followed by six weeks of radiotherapy. She says it was the love of music and performing with Bleeker that gave her courage to stand up to cancer.

She said: "Singing and performing with Harris and gigging together as Bleeker is what kept me going. I love what I do and being able to get up there on stage and sing my heart out gave me something to take my mind off having cancer. It got me through the harder days when I thought, I can't do this, and just wanted to hide away."

She added: "I feel really lucky. I have been able to keep up my work. I have had Harris and my family there with me the whole time. The cancer was caught early and my treatment has worked. Doing Race for Life is my way of helping others to get the treatment they need."

Cancer Research UK's Race for Life, in partnership with Tesco, is an inspiring women-only series of 5k and 10k events which raise millions of pounds every year to help defeat cancer by

funding life-saving research.

Following Lauren's treatment the nurses who cared for her came to support the band at gigs around Edinburgh. Such amazing support inspired Lauren not to give up during her battle with the disease and she is determined to keep showing her support for cancer research.

Lauren said: "On the day of Race for Life last year I found out I was two years free of cancer. And I can't wait to tell cancer where to go again at Race for Life this year. I am going to try and run it this time! I do Race for Life to keep myself fit, let myself know I am still here and that I am still going strong."

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Last year, around 963 women took part in Race for Life at Hopetoun House and raised a fantastic £91,582. This year organisers have smashed the target and over 1050 women are striding out at the event.

Lauren will be joined by Nicola Parrish, who will be the first woman in the UK to take part in a Race for Life run every weekend during the three month season. Nicola, from Colsterworth, will pull on her running shoes to do 16 events in total including eight 10km races and eight 5km races.

She said, "I did the couch to 5k training programme to prepare for last year's run and even then I knew I wanted to do more to raise money for Cancer Research UK. When you see what cancer does to people you care about, it really hits home. I want to raise as much money as possible to help beat cancer!"

Cara Inglis, Cancer Research UK's events manager, said: "We are so inspired by Lauren and the bravery she has shown in the

fight against cancer. And we are thrilled that Nicola will kick off her Race for Life challenge here in Edinburgh. We are immensely proud of all the determined ladies in Edinburgh who help us take on cancer at Race for Life.

“This year we smashed the target and over 1050 women will be forming a formidable army against the disease. We want to say a massive thanks to the people of Edinburgh and South Queensferry who support Cancer Research UK by going the extra mile and making this the biggest ever Race for Life at Hopetoun House.”

Money raised through Race for Life allows Cancer Research UK’s doctors, nurses and scientists to advance research which is helping to save the lives of men, women and children across Edinburgh.

Cancer Research UK receives no government funding for its ground-breaking work but with help from the people of Glasgow the charity intends to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured.

Cara continued: “Race for Life is an amazing way to celebrate life but also remember those who have been lost to the disease. There are over 200 cancers and we won’t give up until we find cures for them all.”

To enter Race for Life today go to www.raceforlife.org or call 0845 600 6050