

Truckers helping 'drive out breast cancer one truck at a time'

By Dorothy Cox, The Trucker Staff

CARL'S CORNER, Texas — Representing 22 carriers, 35 big rigs, many festooned with pink decorations, brought in \$12,600 to go towards research to eradicate breast cancer on Oct. 24, making the first-ever female Truck Convoy For A Cure USA here a whopping success.

Although it was billed as an all-female truck convoy, 10 male drivers lent their support by participating in the convoy.

FedEx of Houston stepped up to the plate and generated the most financial support and by the end of the all-day event had already challenged other Texas terminals to a battle for the most trucks and most pledges for next year's fund-raiser. It will be held at a later-to-be announced date in October 2010 at Willie's Place in Carl's Corner, some 60 miles south of Dallas.

As some readers may know, this was the first time for the U.S. to hold a truck convoy to benefit breast cancer research — or as the event's pink T-shirts said — to "drive out breast cancer one truck at a time."

Canadian trucker Rachele Champagne first conceived of the idea of an all-female truck convoy to benefit breast cancer research. The first Convoy For A Cure was held in October 2008 in Ontario and drew 29 female truckers and raised close to \$15,000 for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Former trucker Ray Gompf of Ottawa, Ontario, reports that Canada's three convoys this year together with the Carl's Corner, Texas, event raised just under \$95,000 and saw nearly 150-plus women truckers participate. And, he said, "next year we'll do better."

He also challenged the trucking media to do their part to publicize future events both here and in Canada.

"Remember," wrote Gompf in an e-mail, "if you got it, a truck brought it; lady truckers are bringing the cure."

He also said Canada is adding two more convoy locations next year.

Cindy Stowe, the trucker who coordinated the first American convoy for a cure, said next year's event at Carl's Corner will have an award for best decorated truck. And, she said, the event will have a Mid-America Trucking Show booth in 2010.

"They heard about our efforts and want to help out, so off to MATS we'll go and build even more momentum," Stowe said. Look for them in the Papa John's parking lot.



Cindy Stowe, the trucker who coordinated Convoy for A Cure USA, said next year's event at Carl's Corner will have an award for best decorated truck. And, she said, they will have a Mid-America Trucking booth in 2010 (Courtesy: Jack Tyler)

As the only (that I know of) member of the trucking print media who was at the Carl's Corner fund-raiser, I want to challenge carriers, OEMs, major trade publications and others in the industry to get behind these convoys.

What better way for the trucking industry to show its community spirit than by helping raise money for breast cancer research?

Stowe was disappointed that some 20 drivers who had agreed to participate in the Carl's Corner fund-raiser were dispatched to other locations at the last minute by their companies. "When will these companies wake up and realize it's the drivers who can make or break them?" she asked.

Good question. Hopefully the economy will be on the way up by next fall and carriers won't be so tempted to renege on their commitments.

There was room at Willie's Place for a lot more booths and I would think companies which make products or offer services of interest to truckers would want to get in on the ground floor of what promises to be an ever-growing annual event.

Stowe had wanted to raise much more money but considering the economy and that this was the first event of its kind for the U.S., I'd say it was a job well done. The event at Carl's Corner may not have lived up to expectations, but what it lacked in numbers, it more than made up for in fun and enthusiasm.

At one point the noise was nearly deafening as convoy drivers pulled on their air horns and their blasts were answered by resounding honks from fellow truckers out delivering the freight on the highways and byways.

There were product booths, activities for the kids, barbecue and fixings, entertainment and speeches by breast cancer survivors outside during the day Oct. 24, all culminating in a concert by country entertainer Johnny Bush Saturday night inside Willie Nelson's Night Life Theater in the truck stop. Faith On The Move Ministries of West Memphis, Ark., made up some free gospel music CDs just for the event.

Here's a thought: Canada has multiple events so why can't the U.S. add another convoy location next year?

Stay tuned for more updates on next year's events as we get them and stay safe!
Dorothy Cox of The Trucker staff can be reached for comment at dlcox@thetrucker.com.