

Restaurateurs raise cash for cancer society

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All year long, they compete mightily for business, trying to outdo one another on price, menu choice and atmosphere.

But for one night a year, [Long Island](#) restaurant owners and others in the busy industry get together under one roof -- for a few hours, anyway.

The object, as always, is money. But in this case -- the second annual [Long Island Hospitality Ball](#) -- it's not about making money but about donating it.

On June 18, some 2,500 restaurant and nightclub people are expected to gather at the Crest Hollow Country Club in [Woodbury](#) for what has rapidly become one of Long Island's largest fundraisers. They hope to raise \$250,000 for the [American Cancer Society](#). Last year, about 1,400 showed up and raised about \$170,000.

Keith Hart, owner of the [Farmingdale](#)-based Hart Agency, a promotional firm, and an organizer of the event, is a cancer survivor.

"I just wanted to try to do something" to raise money, Hart said. "I started reaching out to my buddies in the restaurant business and told them what I wanted to do. Everybody said 'I'm in.' But it's a lot more work than I ever thought."

The event had to be moved from Carlyle on the Green at [Bethpage State Park](#) to accommodate a larger-than-expected crowd. Putting it all together was a yearlong effort, organizers said.

"I can't count the hours," said Richie Bedrossian, owner of [Dix Hills](#)-based Long Island Promotional Group, who handled the entertainment. "Each meeting would last three or four hours, and then we would meet again" the next week, he said.

Michael Bohlsen, owner of six Long Island restaurants, oversaw ticket sales. "It's gone smoothly, so far," Bohlsen said. "We still have 10 days to go."

So who holds a big event on a Monday night?

Steve Haweeli, a restaurant publicist in [East Hampton](#) and one of those to be honored at the event, explained why. Monday is "industry night," or the night the industry takes off as many restaurants shut down after the weekend, he said. Restaurant people "get together for this event," Haweeli said. "But just for this event."

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