

## YSC Tour de Pink, 3-day bike race to help women with breast cancer

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Niki Calastas' YSC Tour de Pink team is called the Pink Outliers. She is seen second from left.

## YSC TOUR DE PINK

**What:** The Young Survival Coalition's three-day bicycle ride to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer education, resources and support.

**When:** Oct. 12-14.

**Where:** From Thousand Oaks to Foothill Ranch. Riders can register to participate for any number of days, with start and finish locations determined by days participating.

**Information and registration:** [ysctourdepink.org](http://ysctourdepink.org).

Matt Purdue is not a woman.

He is not a breast cancer survivor.

But he is a father to a young daughter who, at age 5, lost her mother to breast cancer.

And he's a man who lost his life partner.

Purdue is also a hero in the eyes of many for turning that adversity into something positive with the YSC Tour de Pink, a three-day bicycle ride to benefit women under 40 affected by breast cancer.

His partner, Randi Rosenberg, was one of the first members of the Young Survival Coalition, an organization dedicated to the issues facing young women who are diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I met her in 2002, long after she had been diagnosed and treated," Purdue recalls. "She was involved with YSC, so I got involved as well."

Combining his love of cycling and his passion to give back, he co-founded the YSC Tour de Pink in 2004 with YSC's board president Lisa J. Frank. The first ride took place on the East Coast and consisted of just five riders - four men and one woman. It was an experiment to see whether the concept would work.

It did, and since then the Tour de Pink has been such a success Purdue and Frank have expanded with additional rides in Atlanta and on the West Coast, as well as some indoor cycling events around the country.

This year's West Coast ride will start in Thousand Oaks on Oct. 12 and end in Foothill Ranch on Oct. 14 - though participants can ride for as many days as they want.



Heather and Bella Young

For riders who choose to participate more than one day, the group stays in hotels, with lodging paid for by the money each individual raises for the event. It is also fully catered with support provided throughout.

"We just wanted to do something really positive but also really challenging for the charity," says Purdue, who grew up in Santa Monica and is a UCLA alum.

Aside from raising awareness to the fact that women under 40 can and do get breast cancer - more than 13,000 young women this year, according to the YSC - the money raised from the event goes to helping the organization continue to provide resources, connection and outreach to young women with the disease.

Women such as Heather Young, 39, of Ventura.

Eight years ago, having just given birth to her second child, Young was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer, a rare and aggressive form of the disease in which the cancer cells block lymph vessels in the skin of the breast.

"I was 100 percent shocked. I never even fathomed breast cancer," Young says. "I was completely devastated and I felt like my body had completely failed me because I worked out six days a week, I was a health food freak, I never smoked, never drank excessively. I just felt completely betrayed by my body and I was really angry, actually."

After six months of chemotherapy, a mastectomy, an experimental stem cell transplant, seven weeks of radiation and five reconstructive surgeries, Young is cancer free.



Niki Calastas is participating in the 2012 YSC Tour de Pink, a three-day, 220-mile bicycle ride to benefit women under 40 affected by breast cancer. She was diagnosed with the disease at age 32.

She has since changed careers from a pediatric nurse to an oncology nurse at the Disney Family Cancer Center in Burbank. Working with cancer patients, giving them hope, helps her too, she says, because it makes her feel like maybe that was the reason she got cancer.

Young also hopes to increase breast cancer awareness by participating in this year's YSC Tour de Pink, her fourth time joining the ride.

In years past, she says, the event has been full of excitement and uplifting, positive energy. She's met other amazing women and hears their stories of survival, such as that of Niki Calastas.

Calastas, now 33, was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago. The Redwood Shores resident is heading down from Northern California to participate in this year's event for the second time.

She participated last year after learning about the ride at the annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer.

Calastas says she wanted a physical challenge and to give back to the YSC for all the group did for her after she was diagnosed, and she plans to continue to do so as long as she is physically and emotionally able.

After her diagnosis, she used YSC as an online resource to find information, such as what the recovery would be like after her double mastectomy. But she also used it to create an online support group.

"They have these message boards, so at 2 in the morning when I couldn't sleep because I was panicked about the fact that I was never going to have kids again, I could post something up. And there's other people that are awake at 2 a.m. on these message boards," she says.

"The reality piece of that, as well, is you meet women on the message boards who pass away and it's devastating, because you do form this online community with other young women who are all across the country and you do get to know them. But that's one of the harsh realities of this disease."

It's a reality of which event co-founder Purdue unfortunately is all too aware.

Though his partner, Rosenberg, went into remission after her first diagnosis with breast cancer, she was rediagnosed in 2006 and passed away four years later.

Through Young's time participating in the YSC Tour de Pink, she has had the opportunity to meet Purdue and has nothing but positive things to say about him and the work he's done with the event, which has raised more than \$5 million since its inception.

"I feel like the fact that he loved (Randi) so much and he wanted her name to mean something and he wanted something good to come out of the whole situation is just amazing. And he's such a great, positive guy and he's a strong leader when it comes to being out there on the bike and all of us really look up to him."

But it's not just Rosenberg who is on Purdue's mind as he continues raising money to fight this disease.

He's also thinking of the couple's 8-year-old daughter, Alexandra.

"The goal would be that as she comes of age, she won't have to worry about breast cancer so much," Purdue says.

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