

# Sharsheret team to walk for young women with breast cancer

By ERIN ELLIOTT  
Community News Editor

According to the American Cancer Society, during 2000-2004, 95 percent of new cases and 97 percent of breast cancer deaths occurred in women aged 40 and older.

But young women get breast cancer, too.

"There was this period of time when every time I would talk to my friend she would tell me of a different friend we knew who was diagnosed with breast cancer, which is pretty wild since I'm 35 and this was about five years ago," said Alana Fine, Ph.D. "It was just this crazy thing that it was so prevalent within my age group."

Fine, a local health psychologist and New Jersey native, was a college classmate and friend of Rochelle Shoretz. Shoretz was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 28 and founded Sharsheret, an organization that provides "culturally sensitive support" to Jewish women in their 20s, 30s and early 40s who are newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

"A lot of peers of mine had been really involved in Sharsheret, because they had been using their services," Fine said. "I've seen the help that my friends have gotten and it's been really amazing."

Though Fine is cancer-free, she has worked in the field of psycho-oncology, which explores the psychological, social, behavioral and ethical aspects of cancer, and at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Last year, Fine was the captain of the local Sharsheret team that participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. This year, a Sharsheret team will again participate in the 5K walk at 9 a.m. on Sunday, May 11 (Mother's Day) at Mall of America.

Fine is the team's co-captain along with Ronni Posnansky, herself a two-time breast cancer survivor.

"Our true goal is to have all the Jewish women groups walking under this Sharsheret umbrella as opposed to every congregation having their own little team," Posnansky said.

Posnansky, who was first diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 36 and had a second occurrence at 39, is also a member of Alpha Epsilon Phi (AEPHI), the national Jewish women's sorority. In the summer of 2007, AEPHI adopted Sharsheret as its national philanthropy and Posnansky serves as the liaison between the two groups.

Though no local Sharsheret chapters currently exist, the national organization, which is based in Teaneck, N.J., provides services to women throughout the United States.



Courtesy of Alana Fine

**Team members at last year's Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure at the Mall of America raised awareness about Sharsheret, a national organization that provides support services to young women diagnosed with breast cancer.**

"We don't need to have a chapter here for a woman who feels she needs Sharsheret services to get a benefit from that," Posnansky said. "There is a national link program in which they connect survivors with newly diagnosed patients and that happens all over the country."

Instead of focusing on research and education, the organization focuses on the needs of young patients and

their families and caregivers through networking and support programs.

"There are different issues for young survivors, such as dating, fertility and future health issues that may result from cancer treatment," Posnansky said. "There's also a big part about the Jewish genetics and how these reproductive cancers are out there."

Writing in the most recent newsletter, Niecee Singer Schonberger, M.S.,

C.G.C., Sharsheret's new genetics program coordinator, discussed the fact that Ashkenazi Jewish women are more likely to carry a mutated BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene that can cause a predisposition to breast or ovarian cancer.

Both Posnansky and Fine said they want to raise as much awareness about Sharsheret as possible, especially through the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure on May 11.

"Everyone who did it with us had a great time last year and they just feel really connected," Fine said. "As Jewish women, the statistics are that of the people around us, someone is likely to be diagnosed."

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**Online registration for the walk is \$25 until April 19 and \$30 from April 20-May 6. To register, go to: [www.komenminnesota.org](http://www.komenminnesota.org) and click "register online." Set up a "Myactive login" and sign up under Sharsheret. For information about the walk, contact Posnansky at: [sharsheretmn@gmail.com](mailto:sharsheretmn@gmail.com) or Fine at 612-345-6424. For information about Sharsheret, visit: [www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org).**

*The American*

# Jewish World

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