

Honoring Andi

[By Nathan Mueller](#)

It's been two years since South Lyon's Andrea Whitesell O'Connell died after a 21-year fight with Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma.

But her impact on others remains strong, and a foundation started by her husband and children in her honor is flourishing beyond expectations.

The Live Like Andi Foundation has raised more than \$200,000 in the two-year span to help research the rare form of cancer that claimed O'Connell's life, and according to her husband and Novi High School graduate Michael O'Connell, that research is producing promising results.

O'Connell said Andrea's spirit helps push the foundation and the success it has had is reflective of her.

"She was a very inspiring person and very courageous in how she battled her cancer," said O'Connell, who still lives in South Lyon. "That fight was something everybody around her was really charged by because she never acted like she was fighting cancer. She joked that she fought cancer Monday through Friday but took the weekends off to have fun with family and friends."

Her family and friends will have a chance to get together again in her honor at 11:30 a.m. on Nov. 19 for a luncheon fund-raiser for the foundation at Bonefish Grill in Novi.

Brian O'Hara, who went to school with Michael and his brothers in Novi, is the owner of Bonefish Grill and wanted to do something to help a foundation he has gotten attached to.

"I want to encourage people to get out and celebrate life and be healthy and turn it into much more of a celebration than a charity event," he said.

The lunch costs \$30 per person, with \$20 of that going directly to the foundation. O'Connell said the donation is an "overwhelming" amount and is looking forward to getting everyone together.

He said he will be updating people on the progress of the research and the foundation, including his favorite part, the scholarships Live Like Andi has been able to provide students.

One student each in Novi, South Lyon and at Detroit Catholic Central receives a scholarship from the foundation for overcoming obstacles in their lives with the same vigor and passion Andrea did.

“It has been very helpful to me, my kids and our friends and family,” O’Connell said. “When you lose someone like this it feels unjust and unfair, but this has been a great way to divert that negative energy to something good.”

The foundation also is continuing work on the Live Like Andi Run and Walk, which will be held on May 1, 2010. In it’s first two years, the event had over 3,000 people in attendance.

For more information about the foundation, visit www.livelikeandi.org. To purchase tickets for the lunch call Michele King at (248) 767-5708.



Bonefish Grill in Novi will be hosting a fund-raiser for the Live Like Andi Foundation on Nov. 19. The foundation's biggest fund-raiser is the Live Like Andi Run for a Cure that will take place in May. More than 2,000 people are expected at that event. (Sadlershots.com)