



 **Black Diamond™**

SPRING CLIMBING 08

HERA VS. OVARIAN CANCER

STEPHANIE FORTE

THE BAR WAS OUT OF ALCOHOL. Lean, ripped climber bodies saturated in sweat packed the dance floor. It was a climbing world phenomenon—every guy had at least two girls vying for his attention. Their hips gyrated and arms flew wildly to the beat of the music, perhaps giving thanks to the gods for the abundance.

The praise was fitting since the night was a celebration of Hera, the Greek goddess and protector of women, that inspired the birth, in 2002, of the HERA Women's Cancer Foundation, a non-profit organization that raises funds for ovarian cancer research and awareness. As the frenetic crowd of nearly 300 moved to the evening's salsa music, a question loomed: do these trad, sport and pad-people climbers fully understand the positive and far-reaching impact their fundraising efforts have?

As a non-profit organization, HERA works to accomplish three goals: to raise awareness of ovarian cancer, to fund research, and to provide grants for local ovarian cancer groups. The Climb4Life events are HERA's main fundraising vehicle, and from those funds, seed grants are awarded to researchers. Currently held in cities including Salt Lake City, Washington D.C., and Boulder, past Climb4Life events have also hit Las Vegas, Bend, Seattle, San Diego, Los Angeles and Minneapolis. In its inaugural year of 2002, the Climb4Life attracted 65 participants and raised \$37,000. In 2007, more than 275 climbers and volunteers helped to raise \$105,000 at the Salt Lake City event—at least 85% of which has gone to the cause.

Since the rate of ovarian cancer deaths has increased nearly 18 percent in the last three years (it's currently the fourth leading cause of cancer death among women), it's clear that the science

community needs some fresh approaches to care and prevention. Yet for scientists to find a reliable early detection method and better treatment methods, they need money... a lot of money.

Enter the HERA OSB1 Grant, named for the outside-the-box thinking it supports and funded by the money raised during Climb4Life events. Compared to privately funded grants, OSB1 Grants of \$10,000 to \$25,000 are modest but they're making a significant impact by allowing scientists with progressive ideas at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas and Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions to produce the preliminary research needed to strive toward obtaining multi-year, multi-million dollar grants from the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. Having supported 11 such scientific research projects, in addition to regional and

local awareness campaigns, grants and support, HERA has become a grassroots catalyst to finding a solution for ovarian cancer.

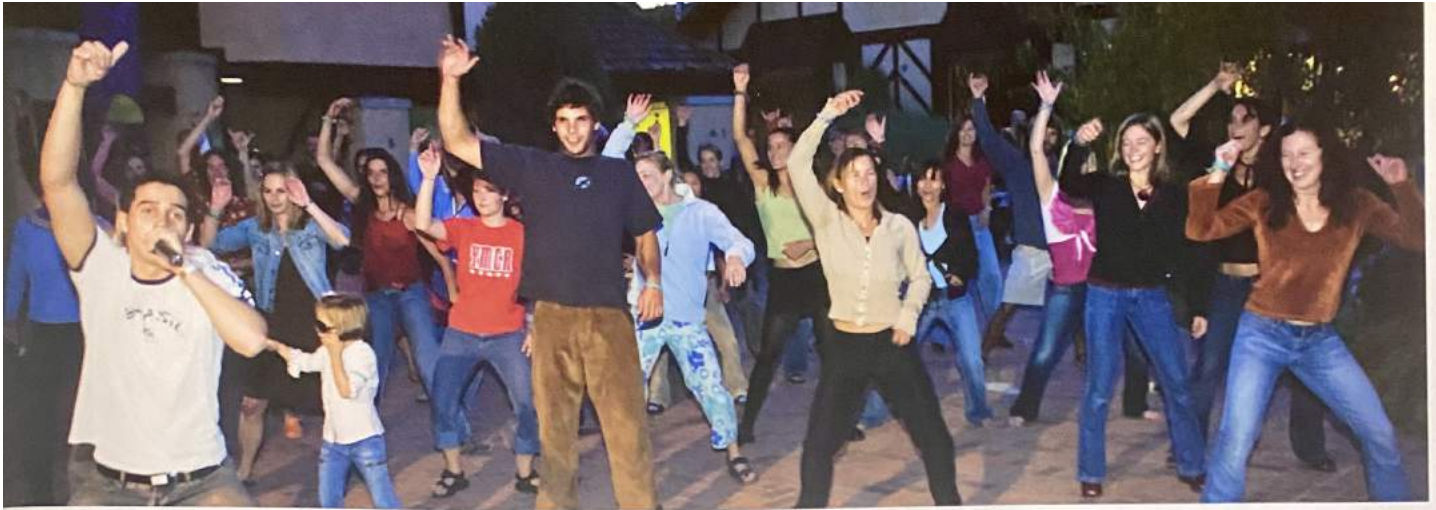
As the last of the previous evening's wine bottles were loaded into recycle bins, promises were made as emails and cell numbers changed hands. Beyond the party, the romances and the thousands

of dollars of gear that was given away, there was something larger though: the purpose. Unlike at crag clean-ups and save-our-local-climbing-area events, the climbers at Climb4Life are supporting a wholly non-climbing related matter: ovarian cancer. Yet they are also supporting the very essence of the sport: people. As the fundraising successes of Climb4Life events continue to grow, it is inspiring to see that in this so-called selfish pursuit of rock climbing, HERA's mission has helped some to discover a greater purpose in climbing.

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Stephanie Forte was the 2005 recipient of the HERA Power of One Award, and is also a founding board member of the HERA Women's Cancer Foundation. For more information and to register for the next Climb4Life, visit www.herafoundation.org.



"BY ITSELF,
CLIMBING
MEANS NOTHING.
BUT HOW IT
INFLUENCES OUR
LIVES BEYOND
THE CRAGS
MEANS EVERYTHING"

-JONNY WOODWARD

