

WHAT'S UP NEXT DOOR AND AROUND THE CORNER

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## Long Beach tourney remembers Michelle



Photos by Jeff Wilson/Herald

**AN ESTIMATED 1,700 VOLLEYBALL ENTHUSIASTS** and supporters hit the sands of Long Beach last Sunday for the 13th annual Michelle O'Neill Volleyball Tournament. Michelle O'Neill, inset, lost her battle with brain cancer at age 24.



**CAROL O'NEILL** is president of the foundation in her late daughter's name.

**T**he Michelle O'Neill Foundation's volleyball fundraiser appears to have a special magical formula — start with a beautiful beach, add a couple of thousand generous and caring people, and the results are a successful and memorable

charity event.

Despite having to postpone the tournament a day, the event last Sunday had its best day in its 13-year history, according to Carol O'Neill, president of the foundation and mother of Michelle.

A total of 276 teams took part, with an estimated 1,700 players at 50 nets spanning the beach from New York Avenue to Lindell Boulevard, making it the largest single-event volleyball tournament on the East Coast. The addition of a six-person competitive division this year helped the playoff rounds move faster and more efficiently, O'Neill said. While she has not yet tallied all the donations, she believes it is possible the total was the highest ever, and certainly more than last year, when the tournament raised more than \$100,000.

The four-person winner was Team Irie, and Jadam Kerroner took second place. The six-person team winner was Blumpy, and the runner-up was Where's Duff. Although the

decision for best team name was difficult, with so many to choose from, Guns & Hoses took the prize.

This year the Long Beach Kiwanis Club introduced the idea of having an information table on the boardwalk to inform passers-by about the event.

Deacon Tom Evrard, a Long Beach resident and a member of St. Ignatius Martyr Parish in Long Beach, opened the competition with a blessing, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of "God Bless America." Long Beach's Jimmy Tolfree had lined the boardwalk with 150 American flags.

The day was highlighted by a visit from three children — Lucas, Alyssa and Victoria — whom the foundation had helped over the years. Donations are distributed to families whose children are suffering from cancer, and to nonprofit organizations that service them, such as Make-A-Wish, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Big Sky Kids Camp and

several others.

As the teams competed, children were entertained with face painting and tattoos under a tent, while other kids collected and sorted cans for the Cans for Cancer project. Teenagers from Young Life kept the beaches clean.

Remembered as a young woman with a great sense of humor and a talent for art and poetry, Michelle O'Neill was 24 when she lost her battle with brain cancer. "My children and I are just doing what Michelle would have done had she lived," O'Neill said. "She wanted to help others, and in reality, she is doing just that through her foundation's work. She continues to light up people's lives as she did during her lifetime, just as her event lights up our community."

If you want to contact or send donations to the Michelle O'Neill Foundation, visit [monfoundation.org](http://monfoundation.org) or e-mail [monfoundation@verizon.net](mailto:monfoundation@verizon.net).



**JENNIFER YANNAZONE** of Long Beach tips the ball over the net during one of the many matches on Sunday.



**FIFTY NETS WERE SET UP** on the beach between New York Avenue and Lindell Boulevard. In all, 276 teams competed in the annual fundraiser event.



**LONDON JAVIER, 1**, was transformed into a tiger with a few brush strokes.