



Thousands came out for the Lustgarten Walk for pancreatic cancer research at Jones Beach on Sunday. Video: [newsday.com/nassau](https://www.newsday.com/nassau)

## Thousands raise \$1M to fight cancer

Lustgarten Walk at Jones Beach

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Participants in Sunday's Jones Beach walk raised about \$1 million, all of which will go toward pancreatic cancer research.

About 5,000 people gathered at Jones Beach State Park on Sunday, for the annual Lustgarten Walk to raise money to find a cure for the pancreatic cancer. (Credit: James Carbone)

Around this time last year, Laura Polen was in the hospital. She was recovering from an eight-hour procedure to treat her pancreatic cancer, while her family was at the annual Lustgarten Walk to raise money to find a cure for the disease.

On Sunday, Polen, 70, of Jericho, was right alongside them with her hair streaked purple for pancreatic cancer awareness.

“I think it’s so inspiring to see everyone here today,” said Polen of the 18th annual event. “I think it gives people a lot of hope.”

About 5,000 people gathered at Jones Beach State Park on Sunday for the event. The Long Island walk was established in 2001 by the Westbury-based Lustgarten Foundation, said Kerri Kaplan, the president and CEO. There are now 40 walks in 20 states.

Participants of the Jones Beach walk raised about \$1 million, all of which will go toward pancreatic cancer research, Kaplan said.

“Every person here, whether they donate \$5 or \$5,000, that’s what helps us keep going,” Kaplan said.

Jeff Weiss and his wife, Abby Weiss, have helped raise about \$50,000 for the Lustgarten Foundation since Jeff’s diagnosis four years ago. His team, Jeff’s Journeymen, collected about \$13,000 this year, the third most of all the groups at this year’s walk.

“You wake up one day, and like your whole world changes,” said Jeff Weiss, 61, of Plainview. “But I’m here today.”

Near the starting line, researchers from the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory shared some of their findings with survivors and their families. David Tuveson, chief scientist for the Lustgartenlab, talked about the early detection techniques his team is developing and the new inroads they’ve made toward a cure.

“It’s a reminder to us that what we’re doing matters to all kinds of people and we need to work smarter and faster, such that we can put ourselves out of work,” Tuveson said. “It’s both satisfying and heart wrenching to see patients and families who come back year after year.”

Bernadette Quiles, 55, of Westchester County has come to Jones Beach with her family for the past seven years. She wore a white T-shirt with an image of her mother, who died of pancreatic cancer in 2010.

“We come every year to help find a cure,” Quiles said through tears. “We don’t want anyone to go through what we did.”