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Armstrong's mom offers inspiration

■ The cycling champion's mother speaks at fundraiser for cancer.

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Linda Armstrong Kelly never had it easy.

She dropped out of high school, coped with abusive relationships and faced challenges as a single mom. But nothing prepared her for her son Lance Armstrong's diagnosis with cancer.

"That was the icing on the cake, and it was not sweet icing," said Kelly, who visited Rochester on Saturday to tour the Pluta Cancer Center in Henrietta and to share her message of hope at the ninth annual Emerald Ball at Oak Hill

Golf Club in Pittsford, the cancer center's largest fundraiser.

Her positive attitude and support helped influence her son, who won the Tour de France a record-breaking seven times from 1999 to 2005 after his treatment for cancer in 1996. Armstrong survived testicular cancer and a germ cell tumor that metastasized to his brain and lungs. His cancer treatments included brain and testicular surgery and extensive chemotherapy.

Much has changed in cancer treatment since she helped her son through his

center, Kelly recalled that it took eight hours of brain surgery on Armstrong to find two tumors.

"It could have been done with radiation," Kelly said. "We're very fortunate to have this here."

Throughout her son's ordeal, Kelly encouraged him to stay the course.

"Don't change anything, keep riding," Kelly recalled telling her son. "Keep everything the way you've always kept it."

Kelly's story is an inspiration to families of cancer patients, said John Oberlies, president and chief executive of the Pluta Cancer Center.

"Linda is the poster child of hope," Oberlies said.

Fundraisers such as the



Provided photo

Linda Armstrong Kelly, mother of Lance Armstrong, spoke at the Emerald Ball Saturday night.

treatments 12 years ago, Kelly said. Visiting the CT scan radiation room at the

Emerald Ball help offset some of the aid to families without medical insurance who come to the center for treatment, Oberlies said.

Dr. Jan Dombrowski, medical director at the center, showed Kelly the chemotherapy room, which has 13 different stations and privacy screens to separate the patients. The facility treats about 23 patients a day for chemotherapy, with treatment time ranging from two to eight hours.

Kelly was especially delighted with the brass bell at the lobby area of the center. "Everyone who completes therapy here rings the bell three times," Dombrowski said. □

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