HOPEWELL VALLEY: Local cyclist to ride for JoAnn Meyer
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Hopewell Township’s Mika Ryan is dedicating her Tour de Pink bicycle ride to JoAnn Meyer again this year.

Last year, Ms. Meyer was too ill with breast cancer to watch the finish of Ms. Ryan’s ride.

Then, in November 2010, Ms. Meyer died at age 49.

Among other things, Ms. Meyer had served the Hopewell Valley Regional School District for seven years as its director of communications and development.

The Tour de Pink, now in its eighth year, raises money to fight breast cancer.

“I’d known JoAnn for a number of years,” Ms. Ryan said recently.

“I learned that she and her husband George had done some cycling and we became friends. I sometimes bike by where they live and would stop in to see her while she was ill. She was a wonderful person. The thing that always stuck me when I stopped by was that, no matter how she was feeling, no matter who else was there, no matter how busy she was, she always had time to talk. I really miss her. I’m glad to do what I can to fight this terrible disease. The real story is their love story — hers and George’s. She fought the disease so hard,” Ms. Ryan said.

George Meyer, Hopewell Township police chief, proposed to his wife on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge during New York City’s Five Borough Bike Tour. They have three daughters.

“JoAnn and I had known Mika Ryan, and her husband Pat for a number of years. They are wonderful people, who do so very much for our community. When JoAnn was sick they, along with many other people from the area, brought meals to our house on several occasions. Mika would often stop by to check on JoAnn and visit with her. JoAnn always enjoyed the time they spent together,” said Mr. Meyer.

“Last year Mika told JoAnn she was going to do the Tour de Pink ride and asked if she could do it in her honor. Needless to say JoAnn was extremely moved by the gesture. JoAnn really wanted to be at the finish line last year to greet Mika, but unfortunately her health prevented her from being there. Instead she sent me and our girls. The ride ended the same day as the Race for the Cure, so as soon as we got done the race we went to Mercer County Park, where the ride ended, with a pink rose from JoAnn to give to Mika,” he said.

“When Mika told me she wanted to do the ride again this year in JoAnn’s honor, I was very touched. The goal of the ride is to raise money to fight breast cancer and also to bring attention to how it can strike young people. JoAnn was young, just 35, when she first battled breast cancer in 1995,” said Mr. Meyer.

“Mika Ryan is a very special person. JoAnn was lucky to call her a friend. I am too,” he concluded.

Ms. Ryan is head of the Mercer County Sports and Entertainment Commission. Her husband Pat Ryan is chairman of the board of the Hopewell Valley Community Bank, which over the years has been involved in many projects to help organizations and people and need.

Former professional cyclist and Olympic medallist, Brian Walton, will join hundreds of cyclists this fall riding the eighth annual YSC Tour de Pink from Sept. 23-25.

The tour features “a scenic, rolling course with technical descents, impressive views, full support including rest stops and support vans and mechanics. The three-day tour begins in Morristown, stops in Princeton and ends on the beach in Long Branch,” said a spokesman.

The tour also features a one-day ride starting and finishing in Princeton, and traversing through the hills of Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

One-day riders can choose between a full century (100 miles) or metric century (62 miles) ride. Registration is under way at www.ysctourdepink.org.