

CALEDONIA – Some things are bigger than rivalries.

So while Caledonia High School senior Madison Woody relishes competing against New Hope, she *especially* enjoys the moment in the annual Dig Pink volleyball match between the schools when people battling breast cancer or breast cancer survivors are asked to stand and be recognized.

“It is a sweet way for us to recognize them with the little pink pom poms and show there are people in our community who are battling or have battled breast cancer and that all this is for them and this is to show we are with them,” Woody said.

On Tuesday, Sept. 29, Caledonia will travel to New Hope for the 10th-annual Dig Pink volleyball match. The seventh-grade match (3:30 p.m.) will be the first of four matches (eighth grade, junior varsity, varsity) in a fundraiser where 100% of money raised will go directly to The Side-

Out Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2005 that supports research, awareness and precision medicine for metastatic breast cancer.

“It’s a fun and entertaining way to show the people fighting breast cancer we’re in their corner fighting for them,” Woody said.

The Caledonia volleyball program, working with the school’s football team and the community, has raised nearly $29,000 in the first nine years, including $2,636.50 to eclipse its goal in 2025, while New Hope has raised nearly $11,000, including $2,200 in 2024 and $3,200 in 2025.



Caledonia High volleyball coach Samantha Brooks also has invited local health care workers to talk to her players about the importance of women’s health, the importance of getting screened for breast cancer and the precautions they need to take to decrease the chances of getting it.

Brooks remembers when defensive specialist/libero Bailie Cross suggested to her that Caledonia High organize a Dig Pink match. She said she never imagined the event would grow as much as it has and make such an impact.

“I like how every year the girls get on board and we add new ideas and our community really gets involved by buying raffle tickets, buying T-shirts, wearing the T-shirts, supporting the game, sending donations and coming to the game,” Brooks said. “It also is fun for the girls because New Hope is a big rival and there is more on the line because it is a district game.

“We have a lot of different focuses, but the ultimate focus is Dig Pink and raising money for research and treatment for Stage IV breast cancer.”

Caledonia won the first three Dig Pink matches, and New Hope has won the last six. Earlier this season, Caledonia snapped its losing streak in best-of-five, regular-season matches to New Hope in their first district meeting.

New Hope High volleyball coach Laura Lee Holman said her players look forward to the match and feel it is “the biggest game of the year”. She hopes the players understand the purpose behind the match and that the community comes out in force to support the cause, players and programs and buys a lot of raffle tickets for chances to win donated prizes.

“Seeing everybody come together for the cause is my favorite part,” said Holman, who started the volleyball program at New Hope High in 2012 but didn’t get a chance to be involved in the Dig Pink match in her first stint as a coach and teacher at the school. “I think we all have somebody who has been affected by breast cancer. I am just glad to be able to be a part of it.”

Holman quickly discovered the match is a “big deal” when she returned to New Hope High in 2024. She hopes her team can capitalize on playing at home and the fact it rallied from a 2-0 deficit to take last year’s event.

“It being at the end of the (regular) season, everybody is getting their playoff hopes in line,” Holman said. “It is a great cause and great for both sides. The first year (she returned to New Hope High), we weren’t in the same district, so it was just for bragging rights. Last year, we had a reverse sweep and that was fun to be a part of. Now, since they beat

us, we are on the revenge side. I am excited to see how my kids respond."

The match will be extra special for CHS senior Avarie Harris because she will play against cousins Tatum and Madison McBride *and* will play for people in the stands.

"It makes you want to play good and to show up and do your best because there are people fighting harder in life than you are having to," Harris said.

CHS seniors Madison "Richie" Richardson and Grace Barksdale also are looking forward to Caledonia and New Hope putting their differences aside for at least one night and showing how much their hard work has come together prior to the Mississippi High School Activities Association Class 5A State Tournament.

"It is an awesome cause, especially since I have a family friend who is battling breast cancer," Barksdale said. "It feels good to support her."

To learn more about the SOF, go to: https://side-out.org/.