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Wednesday, July 28, 2010

## ENDURING BEAUTY

Though Still Supermodel Gorgeous, These Days Christie Brinkley Has Become A Different Kind Of Icon—A Devoted Mom And Committed Activist

By Katie Main



It's a rare privilege to watch Christie Brinkley step in front of a camera. Flashing her signature smile, she twists, turns and tosses her golden hair, each pose more interesting than the next. In fact, after three decades of modeling, she looks genuinely happy in her work, and she makes it look natural.

But it's a greater privilege to sit and talk with her. Perched on couch in her sunny sitting room, the 56-year-old supermodel, activist, artist, business owner and mom of three gazes out at the boats passing through Sag Harbor Bay and opens up about the things that matter to her—things like her tireless charitable work; her love for the place where she lives; her

resilience in the face of personal hardship; and her three children, Alexa (24), Jack (15) and Sailor (12), of whom she is clearly proud ("He was our doctor's earliest walker!" she says, beaming, when Jack arrives home from sports camp). And although I met her just moments ago, Christie is warm, good-natured and engaging, which makes our conversation feel so, well, natural.

**You are supporting several charitable events in the Hamptons this summer. In particular, you are co-chairing the annual benefit for the [Ellen Hermanson Foundation](#). Tell me about your connection to the foundation.**

From Manhattan to Montauk, we have some of the highest breast cancer rates in the nation. I find that alarming, and I've known people who have gone through it. Many years ago, [the organization's founder] Julie Ratner called me up and told me about her sister Ellen, and about how she didn't want her sister to have died in vain—she wanted to turn it into something that would help other women. And boy, has she ever succeeded. Last year, they opened the first comprehensive breast center at [Southampton Hospital](#). They treat the whole family there, because when a woman gets breast cancer, the whole family goes through it. To have that resource way out here on the East End is a real comfort.

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**You're also involved in the [Max Cure Foundation's Roar For A Cure Carnival benefit](#), which is happening on the same day, correct?**

I think it's so smart that these two cancer organizations are pooling their resources. The Max Cure Foundation is a case of a family facing probably the worst thing a family can face: being told your child has cancer. I can't think of anything worse. And they right away said, "How can we help other families going through this?"

**You're involved in many different causes—in particular, you're a dedicated environmentalist.**

Yes, and right now I feel like the BP oil crisis is such a nightmare. I live in a beautiful place where I get to enjoy the outdoors with my children—we really benefit from all the water sports—and I feel so lucky but I feel so passionate about trying to stop the leak, clean up, alert people to the fact that there are other energy sources. As horrifying as the BP spill is, this is happening all over the world, and we cannot allow this to happen to our oceans. We have to be really proactive right now. On my [Facebook page](#) I'm posting petitions and including links to organizations that can help you reduce your dependence on oil and use less water. I mean, look at me, my grass is brown and I'm proud—I think brown is the new green lawn!

**You're also known for your devotion to your three children. What are they up to these days? What do you love about being their mother?**

The most amazing thing about being a parent is just seeing the world through the eyes of your kids; it's like being able to see the world through different prisms. My daughter [Alexa](#) is in the music industry now—she's going to be putting out an album in September. Being her mother, she's literally made my life a musical. My son Jack is an athlete, and it's so much fun to go snowboarding or skiing with him, and we love to go fishing and we love to explore. Long Island has the most beautiful coastline of any place I know, and we go in and out of all the little inlet and coves. My daughter Sailor is an amazing filmmaker and is very funny, and she keeps me laughing with her imitations and her funny bits. My kids are constantly changing and their interests are so wide and varied. I love saying, "Okay, what are they into now?"

**You've made your home in the Hamptons for years now—you raised your kids here and your parents recently moved here from the West Coast. What do you love about living here?**

I think it starts with the water. I grew up in Malibu, and I love Malibu, but it's pretty much a straight coastline. And here there is so much to explore, I just love it, to me it's like a storybook. To see trees growing near the water—to this day I get so excited over that, I think it's so beautiful. I also love gardening, and this is a great place to garden. When my kids were little, my garden was the best place for conversations; they were always out there with me. Now they're like, not so interested in it anymore. But I still get them to come out and harvest before dinner, to get some fresh tomatoes and fresh lettuces. I do all organic.

**Do you like to cook, too?**

I do. I love when I have fresh Swiss chard from the garden or making zucchini blossoms. Basically everything starts with olive oil and garlic, and I just toss whatever it is in there, put it over a little bit of pasta and that's it. Or if Jack and I catch some fish, we'll cook that up.

**You're a longtime vegetarian. Are there any foods you just can't bring yourself to give up?**

I'm a lacto-ichthio vegetarian, which means I do eat certain fish, like salmon and halibut, but no big fish. And I do have dairy, because life's too short—you gotta have cheese.

**Of course I have to ask how you manage to stay in such great shape! What is your approach to exercise?**

I really do use my [Total Gym](#)! I also like to do active things—I like to get out and run down the beach or ride a bike or ski. But I find that jumping on the Total Gym for just 15 minutes and going through the motions reminds me of the same kind of benefit that you get from yoga—a total-body lengthening and strengthening. I keep mine in front of the TV and so I turn on “[The Today Show](#)” and do it. And I love going to the yoga class here, but if I can’t make it, I’ve got my yoga mat so I’ll roll it out and I’ll just go through some sun salutations, and it just makes me feel so much better.

**I’ve heard you talk before about your commitment to taking care of your skin—specifically, I’ve heard you say you’re a committed exfoliator. Any other skin care or beauty tips you swear by?**

I have to do what I can to protect what’s left of my skin after growing up as a surfer girl in Malibu. But the fact of the matter is I’m one of those people that if I go out for five minutes, I get tan. But I do at least try not to—I put my sunblocks on. And I still am a firm believer in exfoliating. I came upon that because I read an article when I was, I don’t know, 14, that said that men always look younger than women because they shave.

**You’ve enjoyed immense professional success, but you’ve also experienced quite a lot of personal hardship. Yet you’re known for your enduring optimism. Where does that come from?**

I think I was raised that way. I always think of my mom as eternally smiling—she just has a beautiful smile and a beautiful attitude. My parents have been going through a lot of health issues lately, which has been really difficult. But my mom goes through it all with a smile, and I really do think that smiles are healing. I always say to my kids, ‘you’re feeling down, put the outer corners of your mouth up,’ because just doing that releases hormones that are uplifting. I think you should try to just stop and count your blessings, no matter what’s going on, and I always start with my three: Alexa, Jack and Sailor.

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### **Christie's Causes: A Family Carnival, A Dream Night Out, A Special Run**

A longtime Hamptonite, Christie Brinkley is supporting several charitable events on the East End of Long Island this month—two of which are happening on the same day (August 21). Together, they make for an afternoon of family fun followed by a dream night out for parents. The 2nd Annual Roar For A Cure Carnival will benefit the Max Cure Foundation, which raises money for rare pediatric cancer research and treatment. The cocktail party HEAT will benefit the Ellen Hermanson Foundation, which raises money for breast cancer support. HEAT will also kick off the annual Ellen’s Run, taking place the following morning. We caught up with the organizations’ founders to find out more about their history, mission and what we can expect from this year’s fetes.

### **THE MAX CURE FOUNDATION: A Q&A With Founder David Plotkin**

**The Max Cure Foundation supports pediatric cancer causes. Why this cause?**

In 2007 we learned our four-year-old son Max had a rare pediatric cancer never before seen by Memorial Sloan-Kettering. We wanted to create a foundation filled with hope and inspiring people.

**What are the goals of the foundation?**

Most of the funds raised go to The Max Cure Fund at MSKCC to underwrite a one-of-its-kind cell therapy lab for research, alternative treatments and finding cures. This year’s event also benefits Katy’s Courage Fund, for a Sag Harbor family whose daughter has a rare liver cancer, and Dr. Oren Becher’s Pediatric Brain Tumor Research Fund in memory of Lily Taubin, the five-year-old daughter of friends Greg and Felicia, who lost her battle with cancer last year.

**Tell us about your upcoming event.**

August 21st is our 2nd Annual Roar For A Cure Carnival. A lot of charity events are evening galas, but we wanted

include the kids. There will be live music by well-known artists like Camp Rock star Anna Maria Perez de Tagle, Stephen Jerzak and Burnham. There will be inflatables, games, great food catered by Jimmy Gutentag of In Thym Catered Events, great people. Christie Brinkley spent a lot of time at last year's carnival. It was clear that she was there as a mother and friend—not a supermodel. Max even said she looked like his mommy.

### **How is Max doing now?**

Today he's in remission but the journey continues. He goes for monthly scans; we pray that the cancer won't come back. He's a hero to all of us. When we shaved Max's head, his younger brother, Alexander, said "me too." He kept us all going. No matter how bad the side effects were, he was always smiling.

### **Is that why the foundation's motto is "Be Brave"?**

It was inspired by a stuffed lion that Max would carry to the hospital with him. Max would hold onto the lion through his treatments, and would sleep with him at night. He said it gave him courage. The foundation uses the character his lion to represent hope, strength and bravery.

*For more info, visit [maxcurefoundation.org](http://maxcurefoundation.org).*

## **THE ELLEN HERMANSON FOUNDATION: A Q&A With Founder Julie Ratner**

### **What inspired the Ellen Hermanson Foundation?**

My sister, Ellen, died of breast cancer in 1995. She was a warrior, right to the end, an advocate and spokeswoman for people with breast cancer. I knew from Ellen that living with a life-threatening disease is hugely anxiety provoking. It creates a kind of tyranny. Our mission is to raise money for breast cancer patient psycho-social support, pain management and educational outreach.

### **How did the foundation begin?**

It was a fluke! A close friend said, "You're a runner. Breast cancer's a huge issue on the East End [of Long Island] Why don't you start a run in memory of your sister?" Memorial Day weekend 1996, I gathered some friends and we planned the first Ellen's Run. [Eventually] we became a not-for-profit.

### **What is Ellen's Run?**

It's a 5K. [August 22nd] is our 15th annual run. It's a carnival atmosphere; however, it's also very poignant. We've had women come the day after a mastectomy in a wheelchair. When someone signs that shirt that says "I'm running in honor of" or "in memory of," it's an emotional moment.

### **You also have an evening event on August 21 called HEAT. Tell us about that.**

It's a cocktail party and auction at this gorgeous home in Bridgehampton. It's really festive: there's music, there are beautiful people. There are four concert tickets and a meet and greet with Lady Gaga [up for bid along with other items] through Charitybuzz.com.

### **Speaking of beautiful people, Christie Brinkley is a HEAT co-chair.**

She's been wonderful. It gives us a sense of pride that she aligns her name with us. It's a vote of confidence.

*For more info, visit [ellensrun.org](http://ellensrun.org).*

—Lisa Rogal

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## **The 2nd Annual Roar For A Cure Family Day Carnival**

Saturday, August 21, 2-6 p.m.

The East Hampton Indoor Tennis Club, 175 Daniels Hole Road, East Hampton  
To purchase tickets, visit [maxcurefoundation.org](http://maxcurefoundation.org).

### HEAT

Saturday, August 21, 6-8 p.m.

Home of Christina Hale and Michael Hirtenstein, Bridgehampton

To purchase tickets, contact Linda Shapiro at 631-329-5480 or [lbsp@optonline.net](mailto:lbsp@optonline.net).

### Ellen's Run







Sunday, August 22, 9 a.m.

Southampton Hospital, Meeting House Lane, Southampton

To register, visit [ellensrun.org](http://ellensrun.org).

*Photo by Thaddeus Harden ([thaddeusharden.com](http://thaddeusharden.com)).*

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