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Ryan has leukemia, won't run for mayor

By NIRMAL MITRA
TOMS RIVER BUREAU

TOMS RIVER — Longtime businessman Timothy E. Ryan announced Thursday he has leukemia and will not run for mayor this year.

Ryan, 55, who owns seven funeral homes in Ocean County, was a likely Democratic candidate to succeed Paul Brush, who announced earlier this year he would not seek another term.

Ryan said he discovered last month that he had chronic lymphatic leukemia, or CLL, and decided against running in 2007 "under any circumstances," according to a prepared release.

"If I was going to be in the campaign, I would like to give it 120 percent," he said in an interview. "But when the immune system is suppressed, you

Ryan

FROM PAGE A1

shouldn't be around large groups of people. ... That's not the way I do things."

Ryan said he started chemotherapy last week and is "already feeling better."

He said he would have to undergo chemotherapy once a month for six months, and "with the new science, I will not lose my hair — what's left of it."

He said that, fortunately, "living with cancer today is not a death sentence."

"The science has evolved so much," he said, "that the type (of cancer) I have is very, very easy to put into remission."

Although he was viewed as a strong candidate, he predicted Democrats "will put forward a strong candidate and run an enthusiastic campaign."

Asked about last week's news that Elizabeth Edwards, wife of Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, has cancer

that has spread to a bone, and has decided to live a full life — including campaigning with her husband for the 2008 nomination — Ryan said he found her inspiring.

"That kind of hit home when that happened," he said. "She is a courageous woman. Like Mrs. Edwards, I look forward to living a long and productive life."

Ryan's announcement drew sympathetic reactions from both parties.

"It's a sad day for Tim Ryan and his family and a sad day for the residents of Toms River," said Democratic district committeeman Tom Rodgers. "My thoughts and prayers are with Tim Ryan and his family, and I'm sure Timmy will fight the good fight and come up a winner, as he always does."



Ryan

TIMOTHY E. RYAN

- **AGE:** 55
- **TOWN:** Toms River
- **BACKGROUND:** A longtime businessman in Toms River, he owns seven funeral homes in Ocean County and is active in the community. He was a councilman in Seaside Park and ran for Ocean County freeholder.
- **EDUCATION:** Attended St. Joseph's Seminary; graduate of American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Services in New York.
- **FAMILY:** Has a daughter, Erin, of Seaside Park.

"I think he's a great individual," said Rick Clement, Republican chairman in the township.

"I personally like him a lot, and I am so sorry that this has happened. He's a great guy, and I wish him well and that he gets well soon."

Said Virginia Haines, Toms River's GOP Club president: "The one thing that's most important above everything else — politics included — is your health. Tim just has to make sure he takes care of himself and follows all the treatment he needs to. He is a good person. My wishes are with him for good health and recovery."

Ryan is the second prospective Democratic successor to Brush to pull out of the race. Rodgers has already said he would not seek the nomination.

Township Council President Gregory P. McGuckin has won the GOP Club's endorsement to run for mayor on the Republican ticket.

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