

BITS & PIECES

A PUBLICATION FROM PHOENIX COMMUNITY CANCER CENTER

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY:

American Cancer Society Volunteers Ease the Burden of Transportation

Undergoing cancer treatment is a stressful experience that impacts your life in more ways than many of us can imagine. In addition to obvious worries regarding health and well-being, cancer patients are often overwhelmed with other issues and concerns. Unless you or a loved one has been affected by cancer, you may not realize, for example, how burdensome it can be just to arrange travel to and from frequent treatment sessions. While some patients don't drive even in ordinary circumstances, others find that their treatments leave them feeling too exhausted to get behind the wheel of a car. Family and friends may assist with transportation, but this can be difficult, if not impossible, especially for those who work and do not have the flexibility to take time off weekly or daily.

Thanks to a dedicated group of individuals who staff the American Cancer Society's "Road to Recovery" Program in Enfield, free transportation assistance is available for local residents undergoing treatment at any of the major facilities in the Greater Hartford area, including Phoenix Community Cancer Center (PCCC), Hartford Hospital, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Manchester Memorial Hospital and the University of Connecticut Medical Center. Four volunteer coordinators currently work out of the PCCC Resource Center and make every effort to ensure that those in need of transportation make it safely to and from their treatments. The coordinators spend hours on the phone each week working with patients and volunteer drivers to arrange a schedule.



Among those involved in the American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery Program at Phoenix Community Cancer Center are (left to right) Coordinator and Driver Carlene Smith, Coordinator Lucille Montagna, American Cancer Society Community Executive of Cancer Control Mary Ann Vanderjagt, Coordinator and Driver Joan Cormier, American Cancer Society Cancer Control Associate Virginia Connell and Coordinator Trina Dean.

As a cancer survivor herself, Coordinator Lucille Montagna of Enfield knows first hand how difficult it can be to travel to and from cancer treatments. "Unless you've been there," she says, "you just don't realize how hard it is. I was fortunate, because my friends were able to drive me, but not everyone has that benefit. I am happy to do whatever I can to make life easier for the patients we serve."

Carlene Smith of Somers, another coordinator, initially signed on to serve the Road to Recovery Program as a driver. Because of her remote location, however, she wasn't called upon as frequently as other drivers. She wanted to be involved on a more regular basis and decided to become a coordinator. She sums up her experience by saying, "It just makes you feel great to be able to help someone else."

According to Lucille and Carlene, there is an average of approximately 15 patients a week who utilize the Enfield chapter of the Road to Recovery Program.

Some patients only need to go to treatments once a week, but many, particularly radiation therapy patients, need to go every day for six to eight consecutive weeks. Arranging drivers can be challenging, especially during the winter months, when some of the most actively involved drivers travel to Florida.

Although there are already approximately 70 volunteer drivers, both women agree that more are needed to ensure that every patient's needs are met. "We do our best," comments Lucille, "even if it means having one driver bring a patient to treatment and another bring him/her home. But some weeks we just cannot accommodate everyone. The only answer is to have more drivers available."

Drivers also find participation in the program to be highly rewarding. For Neil Beaulieu of Enfield, a prostate cancer survivor who lost his first wife to lung cancer 30 years ago and is now married to a breast cancer survivor, serving as a Road

continued on page 2

A CELEBRATION OF SURVIVORSHIP

In honor of National Cancer Survivors Day, Phoenix Community Cancer Center sponsored a special, free celebration for cancer survivors and their families on Sunday afternoon, June 6. The event took place at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield and was open to anyone who has ever had a diagnosis of cancer.

Yvonne Williams, a published author, gifted speaker and survivor of three simultaneous primary cancers, served as the keynote speaker. She spoke on the topic of "Transforming Your Life." Those in attendance were inspired by her triumphant message, warm and engaging style and subtle humor.

Guests at the event also enjoyed live performances by local singers and musicians; a martial arts demonstration by Integrity Martial Arts, L.L.C.; a magic show by Ed Popielarczyk; face painting; free raffles; games; food and beverages and more. A good time was had by all, as shown to the right. ■



Children in attendance enjoyed face painting, balloon sculptures and more.



Members of the Girl Scouts were on hand to distribute survivor gifts, including plants from Revay's Garden and Gift Shop of East Windsor and visors from Phoenix Community Cancer Center.

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

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to Recovery driver is just one way of "giving back" all the support that the American Cancer Society provided to him during his own time of need. He enjoys the opportunity to meet "all kinds of people from all walks of life," and says that although the job can sometimes be painful and discouraging, "it is very satisfying."

In addition to a lot of compassion and a strong desire to help others, all that is needed to become a Road to Recovery driver is a valid, current driver's license; a safe driving record; and the State's minimum required liability insurance. Drivers must be at least 18 years old and undergo a simple training program. Additional volunteer coordinators are also needed to staff the PCCC office and keep the program running smoothly.

If you are interested in helping out as either a driver or coordinator, or if you are a cancer patient in need of transportation assistance, please call Mary Ann Vanderjagt at (860) 749-9549, extension 4828. She may also be reached via e-mail at mary.ann.vanderjagt@cancer.org. ■

"LET'S KICK IT!" Breast Cancer Support Group Offers Information and Inspiration

Like most women faced with breast cancer, Cynthia Rose of Somers felt afraid, lonely and isolated after she was first diagnosed last year. Despite these feelings, she was hesitant to join a support group. At the urging of Phoenix Community Cancer Center (PCCC) Coordinator Maria Frassinelli Sierra, M.S.W., however, she agreed to attend one meeting. It turned out to be one of the best things she could have done for herself. Many meetings later, Cynthia says that she has been inspired by the other members and has learned an immense amount by sharing in their experiences. As a result, she has found that having

breast cancer is "not all so pretty, but not all so bad in today's world."

The Breast Cancer Support Group that Cynthia attends currently meets the first Tuesday of each month from 5:30 to 7 p.m. in PCCC's Conference Room, although it will be switching to Wednesdays in September. It is a safe place to express concerns, discuss the many issues related to breast cancer, share ideas on coping and surviving, and give and receive support. There are approximately ten women who currently attend the meetings, but the door is always open to new members.

"There is so much information out

there that you need to get when you have something like this," explains Cynthia, "and it really helps to talk to others. I thought I would grow out of the meetings after a while, but they are just so interesting. I look forward to the meeting each month."

Cynthia and the other members have developed a very close camaraderie. They share information with one another about controlling side effects; vent their emotions, frustrations and concerns; and draw upon one another's support for inspiration and motivation. The general consensus of the group, Cynthia says, is "OK, we've got this... now let's kick it!"

There is no fee for participating in the PCCC Breast Cancer Support Group, but pre-registration is required. If you would like more information or would like to register, please call Maria Frassinelli Sierra at (860) 272-3030. ■

READY, SET... GO TO THE CANCER WALK/RUN!

It may be months away, but staff members and volunteers at Phoenix Community Cancer Center (PCCC) are already hard at work, gearing up for what they hope will be the most successful and exciting **A Reason for HOPE Walk/Run for Cancer** ever.

The event, now in its ninth year, will take place at PCCC on **Saturday, September 18, 2004**. As in the past, it will feature both a 5K walk and a timed 5K run. Unlike

previous years, however, the two will take place simultaneously, starting at 8 a.m. Runners will depart first, followed moments later by the walkers. It is hoped that holding both activities during the same time period will foster an even greater sense of camaraderie amongst participants.

Dave Gauthier of Ellington, who is co-chairing the Walk/Run Planning Committee with **Gerry D'Agostino** of Broad Brook, says that committee members are diligently working to boost participation in the event. "Our goal is to make this year's Walk/Run bigger and better than ever," he says. "We encourage community organizations, businesses and schools to consider organizing teams of walkers and/or runners, and we are also working on a



Members of one of the Cancer Walk Sub-Committees pause for a quick snapshot. These members, and other volunteers, are already hard at work planning for a successful event. Shown left to right are Richard Cressotti, Maria Frassinelli Sierra, Dave Gauthier, Luci Lawson, Cathi Smith, Remo Pizzichemi and Sue Moak.

special initiative to involve more cancer survivors."

PCCC Coordinator Maria Frassinelli Sierra is spearheading the cancer survivor component of the event and encourages survivors to come and join together to lead the walk. She is also hoping to involve the families and friends of those who have experienced cancer. "For everyone in our community who has known someone with cancer and wanted to 'do something' – this is an opportunity to do just that. Participants are welcome to decorate wagons and strollers so that they can honor or memorialize their loved ones as they walk," she says. "We'll have an assortment of decorating materials on hand, or they can do it themselves before they come. The most important thing is that their

participation will be helping to make a difference for those among us who are coping with cancer."

Participants in the Walk are asked to seek sponsorships in advance, keep track of them on the attached form, and bring the form and donations they raise with them on the morning of the event. Prizes will be awarded to the top fundraisers. Runners can register in advance by mailing the attached form, along with their check, to Johnson Development Fund, Inc. The cost to participate in the run is \$18 if pre-registered,

or \$20 race day. Prizes will be awarded to the top male and female finishers.

All proceeds of both the Walk and Run will stay right here in this community, where they will benefit the quality patient education and support programs provided by PCCC. Funds will also be applied to community education efforts and screening clinics.

In addition to the satisfaction of helping to support a great cause, participants in the *A Reason for HOPE Walk/Run for Cancer* will enjoy a variety of refreshments and musical entertainment by the Quabog Valley Bagpipe Band. If you would like more information, please call Johnson Development Fund, Inc., at (860) 684-8109 or (860) 749-2201, extension 8109. ■

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Many thanks to the following community members and business representatives for serving on the *A Reason for HOPE Walk/Run for Cancer Planning Committee*:

Gerry D'Agostino, Broad Brook – Co-chairperson
Dave Gauthier, Ellington – Co-chairperson
Ray Aiken, Enfield

Linda Aiken, Enfield
Myrna Almero, Johnson Memorial Hospital
Chris Cagenello, Phoenix Home Life
Richard Cressotti, Enfield
Debbie French, Fleet Bank
Kim Griffin, Broad Brook
Lauren Griffin, Broad Brook
Roger Ingraham, Stafford Springs
Tony Jordan, The Hartford Courant
Mark LaBranche, GE Financial
Katherine Mendelson, Edward Jones

Remo Pizzichemi, Johnson Development Fund, Inc.
Connie Provencher, Phoenix Home Life
Maria Frassinelli Sierra, Phoenix Community Cancer Center
Lois Skala, Johnson Development Fund, Inc.
Cathi Smith, Somers
Jan Stimson, Vernon
Officer William H. Vieweg, Enfield Police Department

PLAYING IT SAFE IN THE SUN

By Sharon Christie, M.D., Enfield Dermatology, L.L.C.

With summer quickly approaching, now is the time to remember the dangers of sunbathing. Chronic sun exposure may result in premature aging, wrinkling, brown spots, precancerous conditions and a variety of skin cancers. Skin cancer research shows that the risk of developing skin cancer doubles with just one blistering sunburn prior to the age of 18. Since Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, has been linked to sunburning, the following “sun safety” suggestions may help to minimize your chances of sun damage:

- Avoid sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun is the most intense.
- Keep infants under six months of age out of the sun (sunscreens are not approved for infants under six months old).
- Wear protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeve shirts, broad-brimmed hats and sunglasses to protect commonly exposed body parts.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB (ultraviolet rays) and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 for daily use and 30 or higher for intense sun exposure (sailing, golfing, swimming, biking, skiing, etc.).
- Keep in mind that sunscreens with SPF 15 absorb 93% of the sunburning rays, while those with SPF 30 absorb 97% of the sunburning rays. Contrary to what many people believe, SPF 30 does not offer double the protection of SPF 15. No sunscreen can protect you from sunburning 100% of the time.
- Use sunscreens all year, including cloudy days.

- Look for sunscreen products containing Zinc Oxide, Titanium Dioxide (UVB block) and Parsol 1789 (UVA block) to protect against sunburning and tanning. UVA causes tanning, and UVB causes sunburning.
- Apply sunscreens 20 to 30 minutes before going outdoors. Reapply sunscreens every two hours if you are sweating or in water, including cloudy days.
- Remember, “no tan is a good tan!” Tanning results from ultraviolet light stimulation of pigment in your skin to protect your DNA from sun damage. A tan is a sign of injury.
- Beware of indoor tanning. This produces 2 to 3 times more UVA than outdoor light. UVA penetrates more deeply than UVB and results in photoaging (wrinkling) and a variety of skin cancers. Cosmetic use of sunlamps and tanning beds are discouraged by the American Academy of Dermatology.
- Lastly, if you have sensitive skin, use a sunscreen for sensitive skin or for babies. For acne-prone or oily skin, use a gel-based or oil-free sunscreen. For dry skin, use a cream-based sunscreen.

Dr. Sharon Christie is a dermatologist in practice in Enfield at 146 Hazard Avenue, on the grounds of Johnson Memorial Medical Park. To make an appointment or for more information, please call her office at (860) 749-7437.

Sources:
New England Dermatology & Laser Center “Sun Safety” Handout.

Dermatology Insights. “Protect Yourself Against Skin Cancer.” Spring 2000 Issue. American Academy of Dermatology.

Events, Programs and Support Groups

Phoenix Community Cancer Center (PCCC) welcomes community residents coping with cancer, as well as their friends and loved ones, to participate in the following support groups and programs. All programs will take place at PCCC, 142 Hazard Avenue, Enfield.

Breast Cancer Support Group

**Tuesday, August 3
(First Wednesday of each month effective September)**

5:30 to 7 p.m.

A safe place to express concerns, discuss the many issues related to breast cancer, share ideas on coping and surviving, and give and receive support from others who share similar experiences. There is no fee to attend, but pre-registration is required. To register, please call (860) 272-3030.

Lymphoma Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month


5:30 to 7 p.m.

Dinner is served at each meeting. There is no fee to attend, but pre-registration is required. To register, please call (860) 272-3030.

Look Good, Feel Better Program

Women coping with hair loss, dry skin and fatigue as a result of cancer treatment are invited to participate in this American Cancer Society (ACS) program. A trained cosmetologist works with participants to teach them about various makeup techniques, skin care and wig styles. This is an enjoyable activity, which boosts women’s confidence during a difficult time. For more information or to make an appointment, please call the ACS at (860) 749-9549, extension 4828.

Phoenix Community Cancer Center • 142 Hazard Avenue, Enfield, CT 06082 • (860) 272-3030

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