



# SURVIVOR TIMES

A newsletter for cancer survivors, by cancer survivors.  
Sponsored by The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program.



## Stop and Smell the Roses

by Loretta O'Donnell

Coming home after major surgery and a week in the hospital last spring, I had a new appreciation of my own backyard. I was so happy to be home safe and able to sit on my patio enjoying the green grass and new leaves, flowers and blue sky. Everything seemed brighter and the colors more vivid. Contrary to my previous multi-tasking, deadline orientation, I was content to sit and watch the birds, butterflies, squirrels and fish in the pond. Walking barefoot in the grass brought back happy memories and feelings of greater strength and energy from the earth and surrounding nature.

I was thankful for the quiet peacefulness and warmth of the sun. The recent awareness of my mortality came with more conscious living. I adjusted and enjoyed a slower pace and more mindful choices of how I spend each day. I joined a meditation group with other survivors and we learn from each other, sharing experiences of the benefits of living in the moment.

I try to focus less on my "should do" lists and more on the things that make me happy like taking a nap in the sun with my cat, or walking in the warm sand on the beach which feels great on my feet which have temporary neuropathy from chemo last year.

A silver lining to the black cloud of cancer is the freedom and mindfulness to Stop and Smell the Roses and to nurture ourselves and others. I especially enjoy taking the time to talk to new people and getting to know them. I am usually surprised by the things we have in common. For me, it's not so much about how much I accomplish any-

more, as it is about relationships, how I make others feel and how I want to be remembered. Facing the challenge of trying to live my best life in this "new normal" and making each day my best day.

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# When Do You Tell?

by Louise Flannery

## **Who needs to know you have received a diagnosis of cancer and when do you tell?**

It can be a daunting task to have to inform so many people from different areas in your life. Do I tell my boss right away? Will she/he think of me as "less than" and perhaps not as capable of performing my regular duties? How about friends and extended family? You really get to know who your true friends are (one of the cancer perks).

One of the hardest things I ever had to do was tell my two daughters that I had breast cancer. Aside from them being concerned about me and worrying if I was going to be all right, I was now giving them something they would have to carry for the rest of their lives: a history of cancer in a close relative. Not exactly the legacy any mother wants to leave to her daughters, granddaughters and future generations. Then I had to tell my 40 something son. I am of the generation that felt embarrassed asking the butcher for breast of chicken.

Of course those of you in committed relationships have to share the information as soon as it is known. But then again, how will they handle the news? After the initial shock, what thoughts and feelings of theirs will surface? Will I still be desirable in their eyes? How will my feelings and moods affect them?

And oh you single people! How do you begin to share your story? On the 1st date... 3rd date... or when?

From my personal experience, I shared the information with a gentleman I had only known for a short time but only after he had revealed the fact of his own experience with cancer. He was still surprised, stating I didn't look like the type of person who had been ill with cancer. I took it as a compliment.

**As you can see, I have posed more questions than I have answers for. So my fellow survivors, I need your help. Will you please share your thoughts, ideas, advice and/or experiences with me and I will use the information in a future article.**

**Since space is limited, please keep responses to a paragraph and you do not have to use your name. Send email to: [mehr-bonnie@Cooperhealth.edu](mailto:mehr-bonnie@Cooperhealth.edu) and she will forward it to me.**

# Letter from the Editor:

## **Greetings and Salutations,**

Welcome to the Spring /Summer 2011 edition of the *Survivor Times* – a newsletter for cancer survivors, by cancer survivors.

One of my favorite quotes is by Norman B. Rice, who said,

*“Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness,  
to pull another hand into the light.”*

I am constantly humbled and inspired by the cancer survivors that contribute to this publication. These are very special people that share their inner most thoughts and experiences with the intent of giving back and supporting other fellow cancer survivors during their journey.

I am reminded of that game show on TV called *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. When you are in trouble or you need a little help and support you can phone a friend; poll the audience, or call in lifeline. It's the same theory here... with a bit of a twist.

Chances are, if you are reading this newsletter, you are a cancer survivor. No matter where you are in the process, a newly diagnosed patient, or a 30 year survivor, you are part of this very special community and from time to time you may need some nurturing and or a proverbial lifeline.

The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program is part of the many clinical and educational programs and services offered through Cooper Cancer Institute. This program is committed to providing cancer survivors with access to an array of complementary medicine experiences. Our programs are designed to help survivors discover ways to cope with the stress and anxiety of their diagnosis, and to alleviate some of the side effects of their treatment by focusing on healing the mind, body and spirit. My goal through this program is to bring together, empower and engage cancer survivors to incorporate complementary medicine options into their lives. The inception of this newsletter is the outcome of one such special program offered throughout the year.

If you have any questions or would like to join the *Survivor Times* team or submit an article, please contact me at [mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu](mailto:mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu).

Namaste'



Bonnie Mehr

Manager, The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program

## **Be a Monthly Sponsor of the Tea Cart**

### ***Why the Tea Cart should be called the "Heart Cart."***

Every delicious snack given to our patients while they are receiving their chemo is given from the heart. Our patients are always pleasantly surprised when sitting in the chemo unit for hours and perhaps feeling a little down, when a beautiful flowered cart filled with free juices, a sumptuous variety of baked goods, healthy cheese sticks, yogurt, fresh fruit, candy, pretzels, chocolates, program updates, the *Survivor Times*, and many more surprises, comes along and serves them a little spot of sunshine. It's an inspirational initiative through the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program that serves as a symbol and a testament of the spirit that defines Cooper Cancer Institute as unique and focused on our patients and their families.



For more information or to become a sponsor, please contact Bonnie Mehr, Manager, The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program at **856.325.6646** or [mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu](mailto:mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu).



JUNE – AUGUST 2011

# Signature Class SERIES

A FREE series of classes for cancer patients and their caregivers.

## RESTORATIVE YOGA

Restorative Yoga is especially beneficial for people with flexibility limitations due to a variety of degenerative conditions, as well as those recovering from surgery.

**DATES:** July 5 & 26; August 2 & 23

**TIME:** 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

## QI GONG

Qi Gong is a modality several centuries old using movement and breath as a way to increase, harness and move the Vital Energy that is within and around us. It can increase focus, improve balance and flexibility, increase circulation, and relax you.

**DATES:** July 12; August 9 & 30

**TIME:** 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

## MEDITATION FOR RELAXATION

Join practitioner Jo Anna Carey and you will be led on a journey of self-discovery through the deeply relaxing practice of meditation for the purpose of nurturing and supporting yourself through life's stresses and joys. Enjoy experiencing a variety of meditation techniques and breathing exercises.

**DATE:** July 19; August 16

**TIME:** 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

## LIVE & LEARN

### A New Perspective for the Cancer Patient

**TIME:** 11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

- **Thursday, June 16, 2011:**  
**Creating a Breath of Fresh Air for Your Home and Health**

*Learn how to apply a few simple principles from the Chinese art of Feng Shui to your home and feel better all over!*

**PRESENTED BY:** Maggie Burgisser, C.C.C.F.S.P.

- **Thursday, July 21, 2011:**  
**Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten**

*Come enjoy a very special experience of reliving a warm and enlightening time in your childhood.*

*\* Please bring something for "Show & Tell."*

**PRESENTED BY:** Bonnie Mehr, Manager, Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program and Maggie Burgisser, C.C.C.F.S.P.

- **August: Summer Vacation...enjoy!**

*Pre-registration is required for all workshops. Please call:*

**1.800.8.COOPER** (1.800.826.6737)

You can also register for these classes online at  
**events.cooperhealth.org**

*Please note that workshops are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather.*



**World Class Care. Right Here. Right Now.**

George E. Norcross, III, Chairman  
Joan S. Davis, Vice Chairman  
John P. Sheridan, Jr., President and CEO

# 2011 Art of Survivorship Series

## 2011 Creative Arts for Healing Workshops

**Facilitator:** The Kris Kelly Foundation

**Location:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Building, Voorhees, NJ 08043

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

- **June 1: Horticultural Therapy** – Plant lavender in your one of a kind clay pot
- **June 15: Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets** for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors
- **September 14: Project: Make Your Own Affirmation Stationary and Greeting Cards**
- **September 18: Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets** for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors
- **October 5: Project: Make Your Own Memory/Keepsake Box**
- **October 19: Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets** for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors
- **November 9: Project: Make Your Own Mosaic Mirror**
- **November 30: Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets** for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors

## Survivor Times Newsletter

A newsletter for survivors by survivors. Join our group and help develop story ideas and write articles for “Survivor Times.”

**Dates:** June 16, 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
June 29, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Location:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

This program is free and open to cancer survivors and their caregivers only. Please call 1.800.8.COOPER (1.800.826.6737) to register.

## Therapeutic Massage, Reflexology and Reiki Day

Attention all cancer survivors; Come enjoy the mind body spirit benefits of therapeutic chair massage, reflexology and reiki.

**Dates:** September 13 & 27; October 11 & 25;  
November 8 & 29

**Time:** 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
\*Reiki from 9:30 a.m. – 12 noon

**Location:** Town Square Building  
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

## Bonnie's Book Club

A story is always better if you have someone to share it with... what could be better than sharing it with a group of friends who have read it too?

- **June 29, 2011**  
**Great House** by Nicole Kraus
- **July 27, 2011**  
**Revolution** by Jennifer Donnelly
- **September 28, 2011**  
**The Smallest Color** by Bill Roorbach
- **October 26, 2011**  
**Safe Haven** by Nicholas Sparks
- **November 30, 2011**  
**Juliet** by Anne Fortier

**Time:** 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

**Location:** Town Square Building,  
931 Centennial Building, Voorhees, NJ 08043

This book club is for cancer survivors. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact **Bonnie Mehr** at **856.325.6646**



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# Surviving My Storm

by Evelyn Williams



Evelyn Williams, Cancer Survivor, and daughter, Dianne Hyman, CCI Nurse Navigator.

At 73 years old I recognized it was not normal to suddenly have a menstrual period. After a few days of intermittent spotting I knew I had to get to my gynecologist. I had no idea that telling my daughter Dianne Hyman, oncology nurse navigator, at Cooper Cancer Institute would set things off in such a flurry. I thought I was in a bad dream, suddenly I found myself in a GYN oncology office discussing my surgical options. On March 3, 2010 my emotional journey began.

As a widow, the mother of seven, grandmother of ten and great grand mom of four, I have lived my life being everything to everybody. Having lost loved ones to cancer, suddenly hearing the word "cancer" was like hearing a death sentence. I was scared to death but knew I had to be strong. Being extremely active in my community, my church and my family, I had to rely on all my resources to help keep me going. The journey was not easy but I learned some valuable lessons through it all.

First and for most I will live each day to the fullest and take care of ME first. I tell my children to "give me my flowers while I can smell them." I've learned to enjoy the smallest things in life such as an outing with a group of dear friends the "golden girls," spending time with my grand children, and cooking every Sunday for my family (which

I enjoy). My door is always open and a meal is always available at "Big E's house." Everyone raves about my fried chicken and my children tease me about making a batch of "chemo chicken".

A few days after receiving chemotherapy I was preparing chicken for my brothers' birthday. With nausea and GI upset attacking me needless to say that batch of chicken did not go over well hence the name "chemo chicken" will get a laugh every time we think of it. Laughter is good for the soul and I know prayer changes things. My faith has sustained me through it all.

Dr. David Warshal as my gynecologist/oncologist, Dr. Leslie Hughes as my radiation oncologist and all the wonder nurses and various staff who cared for me and always offered a word of encouragement at every appointment, your kindness is so greatly appreciated and I don't think you could ever hear "Thank You" enough. Working with cancer patients is not easy, I see the burden my daughter carries, just know you are appreciated and your smile does make a difference.

After a total hysterectomy, chemotherapy and radiation I am now cancer free and can see the sun began to shine again. My storm is over now and I am available to help someone else get through theirs...



## What I Know For Sure

by Louise Flannery

- Life is not a race but a journey to be savored each step of the way.
- Being in nature reminds us that everything, including sadness, eventually passes.
- Blessings come in many forms.
- No matter how old I am, there are always opportunities, always new things I can do.
- Happy thoughts are the sustenance of our lives.
- Everyone has the right to live out their life in peace, sufficiency and beauty.
- Slow down, simplify and enjoy life.
- Motion creates positive emotion.
- Difficult times don't make us better; working through them does.
- Good friends are like stars. You don't always see them but you always know they are there.
- Unconditional love is the greatest gift to give someone.
- Everyday has the possibility of a miracle.
- As Thoreau said: Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. live the life you have imagined.

## Gurl About Town

March was national Nutrition Month, and the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program at the Cooper Cancer Institute offered two presentations on nutrition.

I had never even heard of Nutritional Bingo before, but that's what a group of us survivors played on March 9th. Alicia Michaux, an Oncology Dietitian from Cooper Cancer Institute, was the facilitator. Instead of numbers, we had pictures of food from different food groups on our Bingo cards. Alicia would ask a specific question about nutrition, and the players would try to identify the food item on his/her card that fits the answer. Alicia would then elaborate on the question and the answer. We learned a lot about food and nutrition while we were having fun. An hour flew by so quickly. It was definitely time well spent.



by Teresa Kao

I've heard a lot about the benefits of eating more plant based foods but was not sure how to do it. I worry whether I will get all the nutrients, especially essential amino acids in proteins that I need. I was very excited when I found out that Linda Goldsmith, an Oncology Dietitian from Cooper Cancer Institute, was going to give a presentation on "Moving Towards a Plant-Based Diet" on March 23rd. I was not disappointed. Linda gave us so much information and tips. Linda's motto is Variety (rainbow of colors) and Moderation. Some of the highlights from the presentation are:

- AICR Cancer Prevention Guideline: Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes.
- AICR Cancer Prevention Guideline: Limit Consumption of red meats and avoid processed meats (because Sodium Nitrate and Sodium Nitrite are known carcinogens).
- Supplements are not the answer. The synergy of foods is just as important as the individual nutrients in them. For example, spinach has a higher concentration of Lutein than eggs. But Lutein in eggs is absorbed better, probably because of the fat in the yolks help with the absorption. Also, calcium taken without vitamin D will just be excreted. Supplements worth considering are multivitamin and mineral pill, fish oil as well as calcium and vitamin D for women.
- Focus on "Whole Foods" because "Processed Foods" usually have nutrients and phytonutrients removed from them to prolong shelf life. Look at the ingredient list included in the nutrition label. If there are ingredients you don't know, don't buy it.
- Consider the source of the food. Locally grown and fresh is the best. Frozen food is the 2nd best choice. Nutrients breakdown as time goes by.
- Try to get 2 cups of fruits and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables every day. Have 6 ounces of 100% fruit juice every day. But juice is no substitute for real fruits. Corn and Lima Beans don't count as vegetables. Make legumes, grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables the main dish. Make meat the "side" dish. At least two thirds of your plate should be plants.
- Get plant based proteins such as nuts, beans, lentils and peas. Get omega-3s from walnuts and crushed flaxseeds.
- Check out the "natural foods" section of the grocery store and local farmer's market. Go to <http://www.eatwild.com/> to find local grass fed meat, dairy and eggs.
- Try ethnic cuisines. Many have vegetarian dishes. Quinoa, originated in the Andean region of South America, is gluten-free and contains a balanced set of essential amino acids for humans.

### Resources

- The American Institute for Cancer Research: <http://www.aicr.org/>
- The American Cancer Society: <http://www.cancer.org/>
- The Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/>
- "How to Cook Everything Vegetarian: Simple Meatless Recipes for Great Food" by Mark Bittman
- "Quick-Fix Vegetarian: Healthy Home-Cooked Meals in 30 Minutes or Less" by Robin Robertson



## My Joy

By Rhoda Travaline

My granddaughter Taylor Wood was nominated and accepted to travel to Europe this summer as a student ambassador with the People to People organization. People to People offered a "change my world forever" scholarship to 500 students this year.

In order to win the scholarship, the applicant must submit high school transcripts, activities and awards, along with a 205 word essay. This essay must be about an event or person that has changed your world forever, and how it would apply to your journey with People to People.

Taylor, without my knowledge, wrote the essay about how she perceives my battle with cancer. I am so pleased and proud to say that she was one of the \$1000.00 winners of the scholarship.

## My Favorite Superhero

by Taylor Wood

To most fifteen year old teenagers, their role model is a singer, an athlete, or an actor. My role model is a Superhero— my Grandmother. My Grandmother is my most cherished friend. She has always been there for me and always will be.

In November of 2008, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. It was on this day that my life truly changed. While going through this challenge,



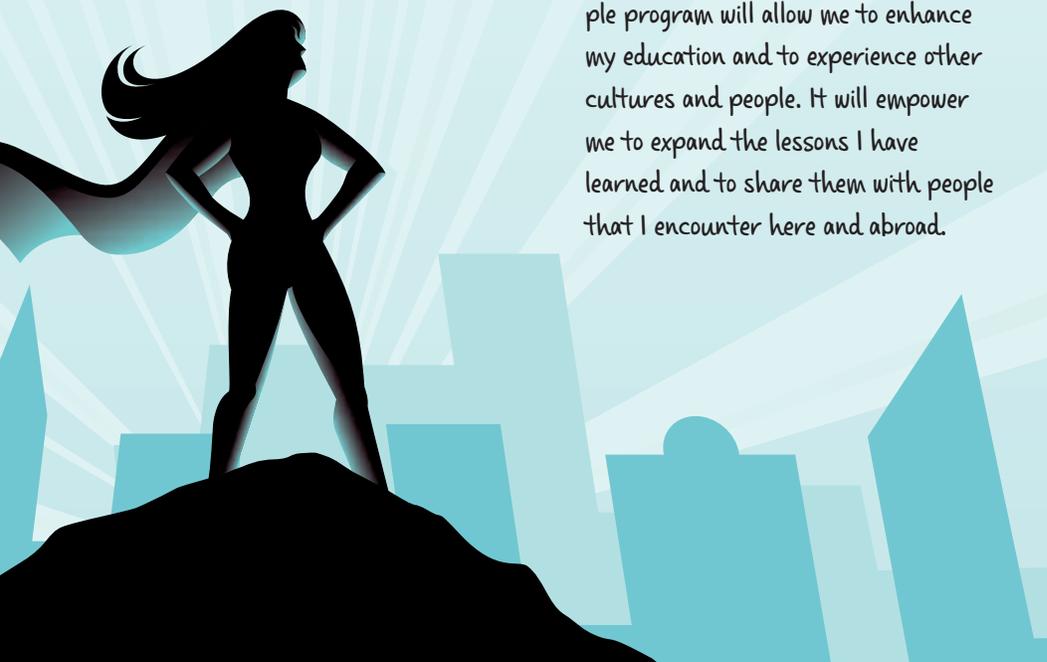


Rhoda Travaline, cancer survivor, with granddaughter Taylor Wood.

my family wanted my life to stay as normal as possible. I still played sports, went to my friends houses, and kept my grades up. Everything on the outside remained the same, but, on the inside, I matured. Through my Grandmothers strength, she taught me one of life's lessons. Even in the weakest hour, you can still remain strong, lead by example, and live life to its fullest. The last two years have

been a struggle, but she still is here to lead our family, she still gives me advice, and she will forever amaze me.

When tragedy strikes, it changes your life. I believe you truly learn who you are by how you respond. I feel that I have become a stronger more compassionate person and a leader to my friends. The opportunity to be a Student Ambassador in the People to People program will allow me to enhance my education and to experience other cultures and people. It will empower me to expand the lessons I have learned and to share them with people that I encounter here and abroad.



## Will it Matter a Year from Now?

by Loretta O' Donnell

The ups and downs of our cancer journeys are physical and emotional roller coasters to be sure with our levels of hope and tenacity always in flux with varying successes and setbacks. While we're trying to handle often overwhelming feelings, information and choices related to our health, we still have to deal with everyday life issues complicated and exacerbated by our cancer or side effects.

Decisions on treatment options, food, supplements, money, time, work and responsibilities can leave us feeling confused and conflicted. When I'm having trouble making various choices, I remind myself what my family doctor told me after my diagnosis last year, "Your job now is to try to get well."

A question that also helps is, "Will It Matter a Year from Now?"

When we're feeling upset with disappointments or annoyances and losing focus of our main goal, the question helps us to "pick our battles" and let go of less important issues. And when the answer is Yes, It Will Matter, it helps me to talk it out with a loved if I'm not sure of what action to take.

I sometimes get frustrated for not eating healthfully enough or exercising enough and have to remind myself that we can't be perfect and I am doing my best. We are often harder on ourselves than others but we are all persevering in adversity.

Having to keep track of all the paperwork for bills, insurance, disability applications, taxes and reimbursement filings, is another time consuming, difficult task especially when we're not feeling well or have "chemo fog." New Flexible Spending Account rules this year requiring detailed prescriptions for all over the counter medications has added another layer to the pile.

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## About The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program

The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program enhances the quality of life and wellness of individuals touched by cancer – including patients, their caregivers and family.

It utilizes therapies that focus on mind, body and spirit while supporting mainstream medical care. The complementary therapies offered through CCI are designed to lessen the pain, stress and anxiety associated with cancer. Therapies also assist in managing the side effects of traditional treatments such as radiation and chemo-therapy. While complementary therapies cannot cure cancer, many patients have found them to be helpful in managing and coping with their cancer. While traditional medicine and healthcare treat the illness, complementary medicine therapies help promote wellness in the whole person.

In addition to the therapeutic benefits, taking part in complementary medicine therapies empowers participants – providing survivors with an opportunity to take a positive, active role in their care and treatment.

All therapies and programs offered through the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program are available at no cost and are open to all cancer patients and their caregivers, regardless of where they receive their treatment. These programs, lectures and activities offer patients access to social, educational and support opportunities. Programs are offered weekly throughout the year. Our outpatient complementary medicine programs include:

- Restorative yoga
- Therapeutic chair massage
- Mindfulness meditation
- Qi Gong
- Behavioral health workshops
- Body movement classes
- Creative arts
- Educational seminars
- The Tea Cart (brought to outpatients while receiving chemotherapy)
- Horticultural therapy

This program is wholly funded through philanthropic support. As the reputation and demand for our programs and services grow, so does our need for funding. If you are interested in learning more about The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program or would like to make a donation, please contact, Bonnie Mehr, Program Manager, at 856.325.6646.



Diane Hatoff, Diane's Mother and Diane's niece, cancer survivors.

## Three Generations

by Diane Hatoff

Breast cancer can strike women at any age.

Three generations of breast cancer exist in my family. My mother, my niece and I all have had cancer.

Fortunately for us, we have all had excellent teams of physicians & wonderful support systems throughout our journeys.

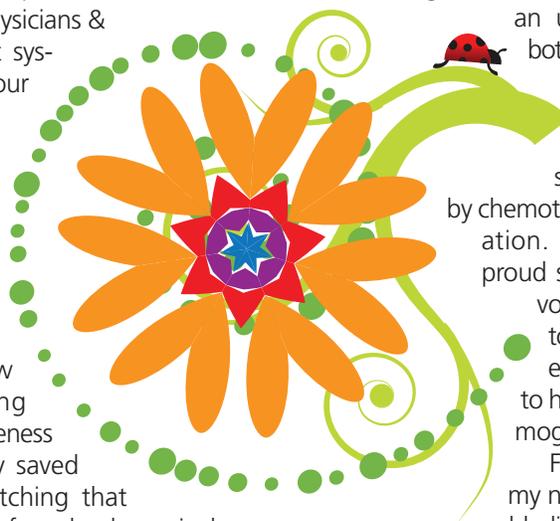
The first to be diagnosed was my mother at the age of 85 years. She became a brave role model for us all. An Oprah Winfrey Show episode discussing breast cancer awareness in seniors basically saved her life. After watching that show, my mother found a lump in her breast. My mother met with a surgeon and the tests confirmed breast cancer. Breast surgery and radiation were performed successfully. Today my mother is 98 years young and still going strong. She lives independently in a continuing care environment. My mother is healthy, active and leads an interesting life. She plays bridge, volunteers at a thrift shop, participates in a daily exercise class, and is an avid read-

er. We are truly blessed to have her.

Five years later... I too found a lump in my breast. I went to my gynecologist, who felt that I was just cystic (I had a history of being cystic). I knew the diagnosis was wrong. I had a mammogram and an ultrasound, and both confirmed cancer. I had a mastectomy, reconstructive surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radiation. Today, I am a proud survivor and advocate for women to do monthly self examinations and to have yearly mammograms.

Four years later, my niece, at 26 years old, discovered a lump in her breast. She was newly married & in her last year of graduate school. Her physician recommended that she have a double mastectomy. One month after her surgery, she returned to finish her graduate studies. She graduated with high honors. Today, she is a very successful business career woman, and a mother of a little girl.

We are three generations of survivors.



# Being POSITIVE

By Michael S. Freilick

When you first hear the diagnosis that you have cancer, it is hard to feel **POSITIVE** about the situation. This first happened to me in 1983, and I wondered, at that time, how much longer I would be alive.

Below, I have listed some **POSITIVE** things that happened to me after I was diagnosed with cancer. I learned that everything about my life was not negative.

1. About twenty one years ago, I met a wonderful woman who accepted the fact that I was a cancer survivor. We will be married nineteen years this June.
2. I am infertile because of my chemotherapy and surgeries that were needed to treat my cancer. On a very happy and **POSITIVE** note, my wife and I were able to adopt a beautiful, healthy, newborn baby girl. She will be thirteen this year.
3. I am on disability, which is very upsetting to me; however, it gives me a lot more time to be with my daughter during the



day. I have gone on several field trips with her from her school. This is certainly a **POSITIVE** thing that many other fathers do not have the luxury to do.

4. I participate in support groups for cancer patients and their families. I help them keep a **POSITIVE** attitude about fighting this disease by being empathetic and listening to their fears.

5. Perhaps the most important **POSITIVE** thing that I have experienced through my bouts of cancer has been the love that has been expressed towards me. In the 1980s, I was single at the time. I received a lot of help from my parents and sisters in fighting cancer. In the last ten years, my wife and daughter have shown me a lot of love in helping me to deal with the many

times that I have been sick. Without their help, I probably would not be alive today.

6. It is important to realize how **POSITIVE** it is that there are millions of cancer survivors in the world today. If you are a newly diagnosed cancer patient, try to understand that and keep an upbeat attitude.

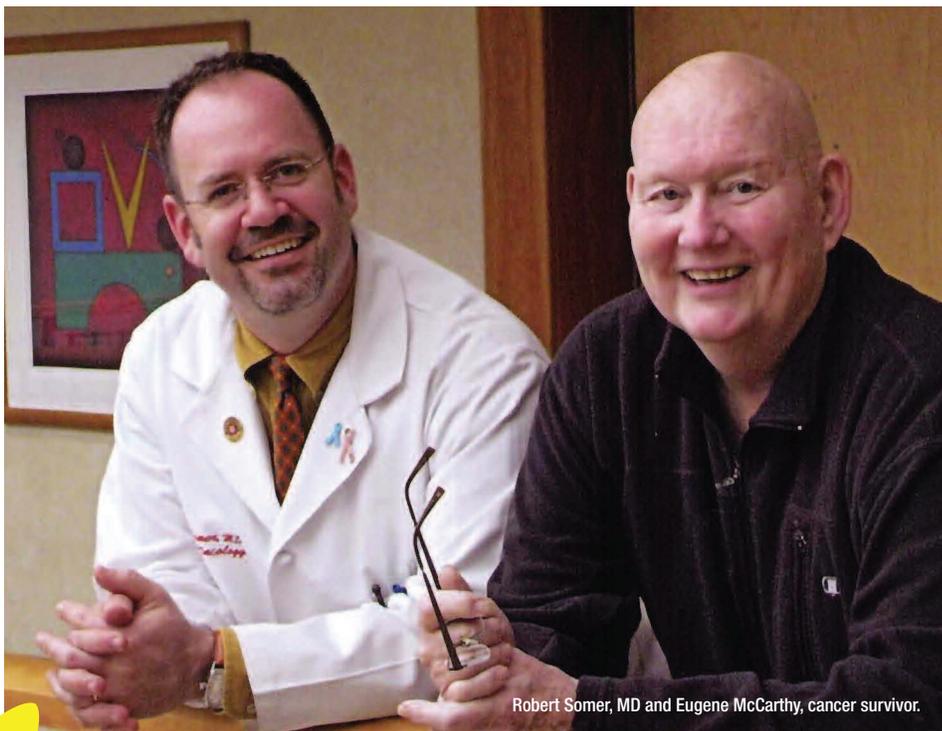
## Physician Spotlight: Robert Somer, MD

by Eugene McCarthy

When I interviewed Dr Somer for this article, I knew already that this "Top Doc" had received much deserved recognition for his accomplishments in the field of Hematology/Oncology. I should not have been surprised when Dr. Somer shared a very personal account of his life and love for his work with me.

"Born and raised in the Bronx, NY" is how Dr. Somer described himself. The youngest of three children, his parents had an old-fashioned candy store in the neighborhood where they lived. He says that he was practically raised in the store behind the counter making egg creams since he was 4 or 5 years old. "Our customers were like extended family. I still carry that experience with me every day," said Dr. Somer.

He went to public school in the Bronx. He excelled in school, but also performed many extracurricular activities such as volunteering in nursing homes, working with the police department and community outreach, helping clean up



Robert Somer, MD and Eugene McCarthy, cancer survivor.



parcs, and doing other good works in the community. His parents instilled in him the value of helping others. He attended Stuyvesant High School in downtown Manhattan and subsequently, New York University where he grad-

uated with honors.

He attended the State University of New York at Stony Brook School of Medicine and graduated with distinction in research and received their Citizenship award at graduation for his community service efforts. It

(continued on page 11)



# My Journey

by Marietta Solimeo

I grew up in a traditional Italian, artistic family, myself a pianist and artist, a bit rebellious and free-spirited. My choices in thinking and doing leaned toward the creative and different, and being the middle child reinforced my independent ways. One of the choices of caring for myself was through Eastern traditional culture, i.e., holistic medicine. So, whenever I was beset with a physical ailment, I explored homeopathic remedies instead of allopathic medicine. I believed that their organic properties had the ability to support the body to heal itself. The longer my belief held steadfast that Western and Eastern medicine were opposing forces, I shunned the medical community and developed a fear of doctors.

Fast forward to the spring of 2009 when I suspected a serious disease (cancer), so I, naturally, started my journey of discovery NOT with a doctor, but a midwife at Pennsylvania Hospital, thinking that I would feel more comfortable with her, plus my two sons were born under the direction of a midwife at that same hospital. I expected positive feedback from her about my condition because in my made-up mind, I thought only doctors gave bad news. I was horrified when she told me that there was reason to be concerned and to seek the opinion of a surgeon and obtain a biopsy. This was one of my worst days, though, given my habit; I went my own way and embarked on a course of Chinese medicine, Qigong, chiropractic, meditation, supplements and pranic healing. In the interim, the midwife called me several times to be assured that I had followed up with her advice, and I finally told her I was using alternative modalities. These phone calls continued, and I can remember one day when I pulled up in front of a piano student's house, and as I listened to yet an-

other message from the midwife, I was so shaken up that I drove straight home and forfeited the lesson. Another few weeks of the said chosen treatments, I started to panic because my expected cure did not manifest, so reluctantly I succumbed to the hands of a surgeon and biopsy, my friend "holding my hand" to this very first, frightening visit.

Even though the results of my testing bore an unfavorable diagnosis, my fear of dying was greater than my trepidation of the medical community, and given that I actually felt freer knowing the truth, I proceeded with the appropriate medical treatments for my condition and became like an innocent child, following the directions of the doctors without question. I still remained scared, but with the help of the doctors, nurses and technicians, I got

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through everything relatively and surprisingly well.

I cannot say that the process was an easy one, though one of the hardest in my life, but right now I stand cancer-free and am grateful, to say the least, and realize now that I was mistaken when I thought "holistic" medicine was a substitute for conventional medicine for ALL illnesses, but now see it as a complement.

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# How Do I Love Life, Let Me Count The Ways

by Ermelinda Sgro

How do I love life, let me count the ways. When things around us seem dead, when everything is under a foot of snow, then we know that there is a coming of new life under that foot of snow. Like a new birth for our soul when life is gone.

I see, I smell, I hear, I taste, I feel: my five ways to appreciate every season of the year, every hour of the day and night, every weather, shiny or stormy, every up and down of life. I smelled the rose, I felt the softness of her petals, and my eyes basked in her glorious color, even though her thorns were warning me to stay away. All this renewed my confidence in the benevolence of life. We are ready and prepared to accept what life sends to us only when we are strong, but we get strong and content only when we learn to

accept what life sends to us.

We will not complain anymore for a rainy day if we think that this same rain is nourishing the earth, is washing the world, is creating music out of a small brook, quenching the thirst of lots of creatures. We accept it; we open an umbrella; sing in the rain and look for the rainbow to appear. Is it too hot? Remember the snow of last winter. Is it too cold? Remember 101 degrees of last summer. Is the sky cloudy? Look for the silver lining. If you get a lemon, make lemonade. We all know Alex's lemonade.

I heard somebody stopped complaining for not having shoes when he saw another guy without feet. I had cancer of the breast years ago, lumpectomy and lymphectomy and I was left with lymphedema. But I found the strength to

go on from my earlier experience when I left my country of birth, my family and friends, to follow my husband to make a new life in America. I am alive and ready to make the best of my days even if one arm is double the size of the other and not reliable. There is so much talk and publication about breast cancer, post treatment, group therapy, cosmetic treatment, but not much about post-cancer surgery lymphedema treatment. Did I miss something or it is not so important now that they can operate only on the pilot gland and cause less trauma to the other lymph nodes? Do not take this as a complaint but as a statement of my acceptance. I do what I can with my one arm and I thank God I have the other one. I have a wonderful life and wonderful friends. These count in life.

## Physician Spotlight

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was at Stony Brook where he fell in love with a beautiful girl who would become his wife, Athena. He underwent his residency training at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania while living in South Jersey. It was during his residency that he became interested in Oncology. While he was fortunate in never having experienced cancer in his own family, he felt a strong desire to work in this field. He completed his fellowship at Fox Chase Cancer Center. He came to Cooper Cancer Institute about 8 years ago, and believes that working in the community in which you live is one of the most rewarding experiences one can have.

Dr. Somer and Athena have a 5-year-old daughter, a 20-month-old daughter and a 7-month-old son. He always carries a picture

of his family in his lab coat. He said one of his goals is to "instill in my children the joy of working hard, helping others, and the satisfaction one has for "paying it forward." He believes he has an extremely important responsibility to his patients, and cannot believe how fortunate he is to be able to wake up every day with the opportunity to work in a field that he loves, while helping others.

Very much like the philosophy he was raised on back at that candy store in the Bronx, Dr. Somer believes in treating his patients like extended family. And it shows...

I am grateful to say that I am one of the many fortunate patients who has been a recipient of Dr Somer's unique and caring philosophy. This includes his proactive treatment of my prostate cancer. As we approach 70, he has given me and my wife Joan, the opportunity to share in the joy of

our wonderful and growing family. Our thanks to Dr. Somer and his team at Cooper Cancer Institute.

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## Will it Matter a Year from Now?

(continued from page 7)

If you don't have someone to help, resource information is available through Cooper Cancer Institute's social workers' office, the American Cancer Society [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) and the Lance Armstrong Foundation, [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org).

For seniors, resources include the State Health Insurance Assistance Program [www.state.nj.us/health/senior](http://www.state.nj.us/health/senior), and county programs for senior residents in Camden [www.camdencounty.com](http://www.camdencounty.com), Burlington [www.co.burlington.nj.us](http://www.co.burlington.nj.us) and Gloucester [www.co.gloucester.nj.us](http://www.co.gloucester.nj.us).

# The Power of Love

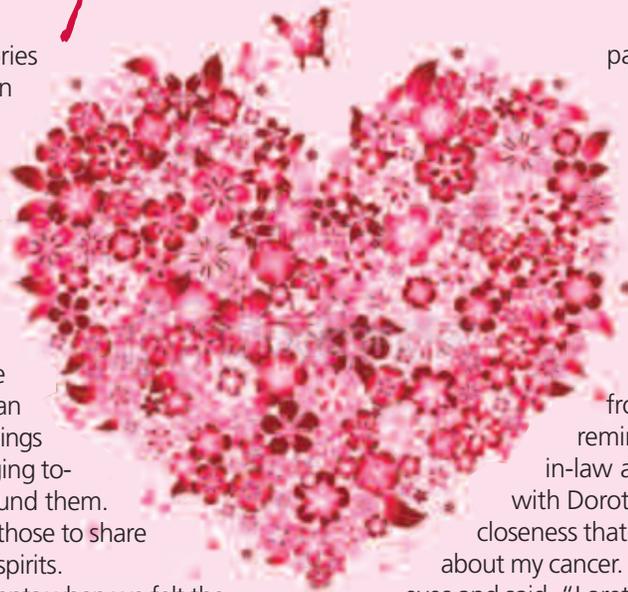
by Loretta O'Donnell

One of my favorite recent family memories is singing out loud with my husband, son and daughter along with Bruce Springsteen and a large stadium full of people, "Everybody has a hungry heart. Everybody wants to have a home. Nobody wants to be alone." I remember the feeling of closeness with my family and the feeling of oneness and good will with the thousands of my temporary extended family.

It is one of those indelible moments in time programmed in my heart and mind that I can recall whenever I want to bring the same feelings of love, peace and joy. During that time singing together, everyone was smiling at others around them. I wish we could bottle positive feelings like those to share in places and times of strife to lift people's spirits.

We all have special memories and moments when we felt the power of love that we can recall when needed. I recently had a test result scare while my family was away and I envisioned their loving presence to help me through middle of the night worries where we often think the worst. The power of love to help heal both physical and emotional suffering has been shown to be real, whether it's self love, social love or spiritual connection with the universe. Feelings of love, whether giving or receiving, help us turn off our fear response and increase hormones such as endorphins which can improve our immune system, as well as lower our heart rate and blood pressure. A simple hug or stroking the family pet elevates our mood and reduces anxiety.

Since my cancer diagnosis a year ago, I have often been reminded that love comes in many forms. I have felt loving kindness from many friends and new acquaintances who have replaced my former coworkers in my daily life. My fellow cancer



patients, survivors, doctors, nurses and staff are my new extended family. I feel their caring when I attend the Complementary Medicine Program events, and am nurtured by people conducting workshops such as chair massages, yoga, Reiki and reflexology.

I recently felt this power from an elderly woman I met who reminded me of my beloved mother-in-law and late mother. After speaking with Dorothy for only a short while, I felt a closeness that opened me up to confide in her about my cancer. She took my hand, looked in my eyes and said, "Loretta, I pray every day and will pray for you." I felt that it was fate that I met her when I needed that kind of connection and peaceful reassurance to keep trying my best for my family.

I recently listened to audio book tapes called *The Love Response* (Dr. Eva Selhub) that help people create a "love shield" when they are feeling bad that helps them respond more positively, which in turn generates more adaptability, resiliency and love responses from those around them.

I wonder what makes Hungry Heart one of Springsteen's most popular, universally loved sing-a-longs. I think it's because it expresses a truth of human nature everyone can identify with, that no matter how successful, we all crave that feeling of love, understanding or connection with others. It's comforting to remind myself that loved ones, past and present, are always with us in our hearts and we are with them.

## Stick with Steaming

submitted by Alicia Michaux, MS, RD,  
Outpatient Oncology Dietitian

Delicious recipes make getting and staying healthy a lot easier. This recipe pairs flaky, pacific halibut with potent ginger and steamed greens for a powerful cancer-fighting meal. The Monterey Bay Aquarium considers the Pacific variety the best choice for halibut. It's full of healthful omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to protect against cancer, as well as, heart disease, inflammation and dementia. Plus steaming your meal and using an oil-based sauce instead of butter can cut down on calories and help you maintain a healthy weight.

### Steamed Halibut with Ginger and Green Beans

- 1 lb. fresh green beans
- 1 lb. halibut (4 fillets), rinsed and patted dry with paper towel
- 1/2 tsp. coarse sea salt
- 1 Tbsp. minced fresh ginger
- 3 Tbsp. thinly sliced green onions
- 1 Tbsp. low-sodium dark soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp. peanut oil
- 1 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro sprigs, lightly packed

Steam green beans for about 5 minutes and set aside.

Gently rub both sides of the fillets with salt. Place them onto a heatproof ceramic dish. Sprinkle ginger over top.

Place dish onto a steamer over several inches of boiling water and cover. Gently steam fillets for 10 to 12 minutes.

Remove ceramic dish from steamer. Sprinkle green onions and drizzle soy sauce over fillets.

Heat peanut and sesame oils in small skillet over medium high heat until they just begin to smoke. Then carefully pour on top of fillets. Use caution because hot oil will cause onion and residual water on fillets to pop and spatter. Arrange green beans around fillets. Garnish fish with cilantro and serve immediately.

**Makes 4 servings.**

**Nutrition Information (Per serving):** 200 calories, 7 g total fat (1 g saturated fat), 8 g carbohydrate, 26 g protein, 4 g dietary fiber, 410 mg sodium.

**Source:** American Institute for Cancer Research ([www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org))

