

ECHO

INFUSIONS



The ECHO Cancer Foundation Newsletter

WINTER 2009

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Our Mission

The ECHO Cancer Foundation is a unique, non-profit organization dedicated to providing hope, education and supportive care to those whose lives have been touched by cancer. Our programs and services are available to cancer patients, their families and caregivers, regardless of where they receive treatment.

One Special Volunteer's Story...

Cancer stole both of my parents. My dad contracted colon cancer in 2001, beat it for a while, but it came back in December 2004. After surgery, he lived for another seven months before it finally overtook him. My mom, the stubborn Yankee that she was, was admitted to Backus on November 15th of last year and was diagnosed with peritoneal cancer in the lining of her abdomen. I say stubborn because she was told after being diagnosed that surgery was not an option. A couple of weeks before she entered the hospital, she had been driving a friend of hers to Westerly for chemo treatments. Her friend had the same cancer, had successful surgery, and was recovering nicely. I believe that my mom didn't let on for quite a while that she wasn't feeling well. It was five weeks from her entry into Backus that she passed away. I often deal with the guilt of, "Why didn't I ask her sooner if she wasn't feeling well?" But, in my heart, I know that my parents are reunited and out of pain.

Telling my story is a form of therapy. It's also the reason that I'm writing this article. When my mother was at ECHO, Laura would often drop by and on one visit while I was there, Laura and I realized that we had known each other for about 45 years. During another visit, Laura got into detail about what The ECHO Cancer Foundation does. It was one of the charities that I listed for memorial donations along with Hospice, after my mom passed away. This past May I was furloughed down to four days a week at my place of work, a casualty of the economic downturn. I asked Laura if I could come in and volunteer in her office come the fall. I can't go across the hall and volunteer with patients (it's still too raw and painful), but if there was anything that I could do to help her wonderful cause in the office, I'd be there.

When we finally met in September, she suggested that I help out editing The ECHO Cancer Foundation's newsletter, and so here we go. It's very exciting to be able to help in any way. It's also a way to connect with you, with whom I share something. Cancer has touched all of our lives. In Laura's Letter, she talks about when a patient and their family get that first diagnosis. There are many different and sometimes downright scary words and phrases that get added to our vocabulary. My experience is that the ECHO Cancer Foundation is there to reassure us if we are troubled, saddened or frustrated.

One thing that I do know is that every person that I dealt with over eight years at ECHO cares. They care deeply.

The treatment that my dad received from Dr. Slater and the treatment that my mom received from Dr. Kapur was caring and wonderful. The explanations we received of what my parents were going through were thorough, but uncomplicated. That was a big help, believe me! That's why this foundation was started - to allow the care that the doctors and nurses bring during treatment to continue at a different level. Not everyone who contracts this insidious disease meets the same fate that my parents did. There are lots of people who come out of the ECHO offices as conquerors, beating cancer. They may need help from other sources as they fight their battle. We're here for them!

- David C. Cruthers, ECHO Volunteer

LAURA'S LETTER

Helen and her husband left the Foundation Office last week with a goodie bag full of wigs, brochures and hope. Stopping at the door, she turned to me, eyes brimming with tears and said, **"Thank you so much. I just wish I had known you were here when I was first diagnosed."**

Reflecting on our visit, I realized that I hear that statement often and wondered what I could do about it. The answer seemed obvious: find a better way to introduce local cancer patients and their families to the Foundation and the services we offer. However, I also realized that task was easier said than done. At diagnosis, a patient may feel they are faced with information overload. They are bombarded with a new vocabulary, doctors, appointments and prescriptions. Seeking out assistance is often just one extra thing to do on a long list of important things to do.

In actuality, assistance for patients is tucked into a small office right across the hall! The ECHO Cancer Foundation is a unique, 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to providing supportive services, guidance and education to cancer patients and their caregivers.

Working closely with the doctors and nursing staff of Eastern Connecticut Hematology and Oncology, the Foundation strives to assist cancer patients and their families with various programs and services during the various stages of their disease.

ECHO Cancer Foundation programs include the ONE TO ONE Cancer Mentoring Program. This program offers patients support and information from someone who has "been there". Trained Cancer Survivors are available to listen and talk about any non-medical questions or concerns that a patient may have. Patients may speak with their Mentor once, or as often as they feel necessary throughout the course of their treatment and recovery. This program is free of charge and is available to any cancer patient, regardless of where the patient is receiving treatment. Information about additional Foundation programs and services, as well as personalized consultations, may be obtained through the Foundation office or website: echocancerfoundation.com.



So, whether you are a new or existing cancer patient and would like to know more about The ECHO Cancer Foundation, please give me a call, stop into the Foundation Office across the hall from ECHO Associates or email me at laurasf@echocancerfoundation.com. I look forward to meeting you and finding a Foundation program or service to fit your needs.

Sincerely,
 Laura Stevenson-Flom, LMT
 Executive Director, The ECHO Cancer Foundation
laurasf@echocancerfoundation.com
 860-886-8362 ext. 289

Someone in your community needs a ride!

Do you have an hour a day, once a week to help provide assistance to someone needing transportation to their chemotherapy appointment? If the answer is yes – please consider joining the **UCFS** (United Community & Family Services) **Medical Transportation Team** or **The ACS** (American Cancer Society) **Road to Recovery Program**.

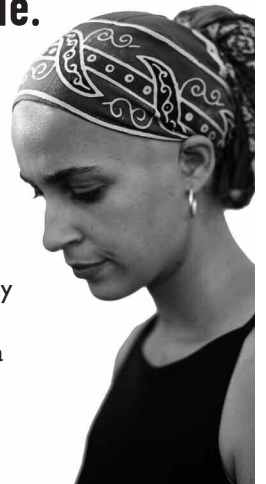
If you can help, please call Lori Rygielski at UCFS, 860-822-4227 or ACS at 800-227-2345 and offer to be a part of this important link in someone's cancer care.

Gently Used Wigs Available.

Are you looking for a wig?

The Foundation currently has a lovely selection of gently used, lovingly refurbished and refreshed wigs. These wigs are available to you at **NO COST**. Please call the Foundation Office for a fitting appointment.

If you have a wig that you no longer have any use for, please consider donating it to the Foundation. We will make sure that it finds a great home on someone's head!



Thank you Congressman Courtney



The Physicians and staff of Eastern Connecticut Hematology and Oncology and The ECHO Cancer Foundation would like to thank Congressman Joe Courtney for his support in our fight to SAVE CANCER CARE.

Recently Congressman Courtney came to our clinic and witnessed first hand the complexity of delivering cancer care. He listened and observed as our caregivers explained the critical procedures that are performed in order to safely and effectively administer treatments for cancer patients. He also was keenly aware that having the diagnosis of cancer requires the help of many disciplines. As a community oncology practice we are very proud to be able to provide many of these services directly through our office or through The ECHO Foundation.

Medicare has severely cut payments for cancer care since 2004. We are now facing additional cuts that would simply be unsustainable for a community oncology practice to survive. Throughout our country oncology practices have had to close their doors. We are in desperate need for leaders such as Congressman Courtney to stand up and fight to save cancer care.

Please join us in thanking him for his support. You can contact the Congressman by calling his office in Norwich or in Washington.

Congressman Joe Courtney
 101 Water St. - Suite 301
 Norwich, CT 06360,
 860-886-0139

Congressman Joe Courtney
 215 Cannon Building
 Washington DC 20515
 202-225-2076

For more information about any ECHO Foundation events or programs, please contact Laura Stevenson-Flom at 860-886-8362 ext. 289