



Cancer Support Group NEWSLETTER

THE MISSION OF THE BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE:

To provide free skilled home nursing services, equipment, information and supplies at cost for cancer patients and their families in Berrien County.

February 2008

(269) 429-3281 or (269) 683-7460

VOLUME XVII ISSUE II

The **BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP** is a group for patients, family members and care givers. Come share successes, feelings, fears and practical methods of coping with the physical and emotional aspects of living with the diagnosis of cancer.

A Time of Renewal and Spiritual Blessing

No one likes to be sick
And yet we know
It takes sunshine and rain
To make flowers grow . .
And if we never were sick
And never felt pain,
We'd be like a desert
Without any rain,
And who wants a life
That is barren and dry
With never a "cloud"
To "darken the sky" . .
For "continuous sun"
Goes unrecognized
Like the blessings GOD sends
Which are often disguised,
For sometimes a sickness
That seems so distressing
Is a "time of renewal"
And a "spiritual blessing."



Author Unknown

Helping Children Understand Cancer **Talking to Your Kids About Your Diagnosis**

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Jeanie M Barnett – Director

Your cancer diagnosis has a profound impact on your entire family. Not only do you have new information to learn and treatment decisions to make, but, if you have children, you're probably also concerned about how much to tell them about what you're going through.

Here are 10 Tips for communication with your children

1. Give your children accurate, age-appropriate information about cancer. Don't be afraid to use the word "cancer". Tell or show them where the cancer is in the body. Practice your explanation beforehand so you feel more comfortable. Remember that if you don't talk to your kids about cancer, they may invent their own explanations, which can be even more frightening than the facts.
2. Explain the treatment plan and how it will affect their lives. Prepare your children for any physical changes you might go through during treatment (for instance, hair loss, extreme tiredness, weight loss). Let them know that their needs will be taken care of (for example, Dad will bring you to soccer practice instead of Mom).
3. Answer your children's questions as accurately as possible. Take into account their age and prior experience with serious illness in the family. If you do not know the answer to a question, don't panic. Say, "I don't know. I will try to find out the answer and let you know."
4. Reassure your children. Explain to them that no matter how they have been behaving or what they've been thinking, they did not do anything to cause the cancer. Let them know that they cannot "catch" cancer like they can catch a cold.
5. Let your kids know they can turn to other members of your support system, too. These people include your spouse or partner, relatives, friends, clergy person, teachers, coaches and your health care team. Tell your children that they can ask questions of these adults and talk to them about their feelings.
6. Let your children participate in your care. Give them age-appropriate tasks such as bringing you a glass of water or an extra blanket.
7. Encourage your children to express their feelings. Let them know that they can express any feelings, even those that are uncomfortable. Let them know, too, that it's okay to say, "I don't feel like talking right now."
8. Reassure your children that they will be cared for. Tell them that even if you can't always provide the care directly, their needs are important and will be taken care of.
9. You may have less energy, but use what you have to communicate with your children. Make sure you understand what your kids are asking, and make sure they always understand what you are saying.
10. As always, show your kids a lot of love and affection. Let them know that although things are different, your love for them has not changed.

Talking About Feelings.

Children have many different reactions when they learn a parent or relative has cancer. They can be afraid or confused, or feel guilty or angry.

Let your kids know that . . .

.....feelings are never wrong.

.....what ever they are feeling is okay and normal

.....it is even normal to feel one way one day and another way the next.

Tell your children that you have a wide range of feelings, too.

Special Considerations When Talking to Teens

The teens years are often difficult. Talking to your teenager about your diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis might be one of your biggest challenges. This is because it is common for teens to be struggling with their own issues.

Teens are often very involved with their friends and school and may seem to put themselves first. This is because they are at the age when people try to figure out who they are as they move toward independence. Peer pressure, demands of school, and worries about the future are common challenges for teens. If on top of that, a parent or family member is diagnosed with cancer, teens may have an especially hard time.

This doesn't mean they won't be able to cope. But it does mean teens are likely to have different needs than younger children.

- Be prepared with specific information about your diagnosis and treatment. Answer teens' questions openly and honestly, and let them know of people and places they can go for more information
- Respect your teen's privacy. Teens may want to talk only to certain people about your illness. Make sure there are other people (close relatives or close family friends) they can go to, but let your teens decide.
- Strive for consistency. Allow teens to spend as much time as needed seeing their friends, keeping up with schoolwork, and going to social activities. Let them know that you think it's important for them to be teenagers.
- Be aware of teen's special concerns. Teens might have special concerns such as, "Will I get this cancer?" Check with your medical team about how to best answer these questions. In addition, your teen might be concerned about the cost of treating your cancer and wonder if there will be money for college or other big expenses.

When a Child Has Cancer - Helping Siblings Cope.

Sometimes it is a child, not a parent, who is diagnosed with cancer.

- Let siblings know that nothing they did or said caused the cancer. The cancer happened on its own. It is not anyone's fault. Make sure young children know that cancer is not contagious.
- Prepare siblings in advance for changes. When the child with cancer starts treatment, there may be side effects such as hair loss or weight changes. Let siblings know ahead of time that these side effects might happen and that they are part of the treatment to help their brother or sister get better.
- Include siblings in what's happening. Be available for any questions or concerns children in the family might have. Be honest and hopeful. If the child with cancer is in the hospital, siblings may want to draw pictures, send cards, and talk on the phone or visit. At home, find ways for the child with cancer and his or her siblings to spend time together in relaxing, stress-free ways. For instance, they could watch a video together or play a board game.

Try to make as much time as possible for your well children. Having a sibling with cancer is very emotional to well children. In addition to being worried about their sibling, your well children might feel sad that you don't have much time for them. They may even feel jealous that their brother or sister is getting so much of your attention. Feeling this way might make your well children angry or guilty. Be available to talk things over and let them know it's okay to have strong feelings. Remind them often how special they are and how proud you are to be their parent.

Keeping the Lines of Communication Open.

Good communication with your children helps everyone in the family cope with whatever changes lie ahead.

Let your children know they can always come to you and that you will tell them the truth. Be hopeful.

If they have trouble talking about cancer, suggest to your children that they try writing down their questions and concerns.

Allow children to “schedule” family update meetings when they can discuss what’s on their mind, share how they are feeling, and find out new information.

Try to spend relaxed, stress-free time with your children to talk about their hobbies, school life, friends and activities. Help them feel free to talk about fun things. Let them know that cancer is only one of many things to talk about. Enjoy being together.

Build a support network. Speak with your spouse or partner, close friends, or your child’s teachers at school about being available should your child need additional support. Make sure your child feels comfortable with this. Don’t be afraid to ask for help.

When helping your kids cope with your diagnosis, it’s almost impossible to be prepared for every situation. Sometimes, you may not know what to say. This is normal and okay. Coping with cancer may leave you feeling vulnerable, but remember: you are the expert on your children. Cancer can be very overwhelming and disruptive, but it doesn’t change the fact that you know your children the best. Trust your sense of how to best support your kids during this difficult time.

Among the many difficult questions parents face when diagnosed with cancer is, “What do I tell my children?” Fearful that they might upset or worry their youngsters and teens, some parents withhold the news. But even at a very young age, children can sense when something is wrong. If not told the truth, they might imagine that things are worse than they really are, or even that they themselves are the cause of the problem. Talking to a child about a parent’s, grandparents or sibling’s cancer and how it will affect the family isn’t easy, but it is necessary.

Learning that someone in the family has cancer is an emotional thing for children. They might feel afraid, confused, guilty, or angry. In fact, they are likely to feel different things at different times. If you help your children stay informed and connected, they will have an easier time coping with the changes that cancer brings. Let them know that strong feelings are normal and that with your love and support, you can move forward together and hope.

In Loving Memory

During December 2007, Memorial Donations were generously made by and for the following people:

In Memory of Ronald Both

Richard & Marilyn Bartz, Berrien Springs

Erica Bashore, Chula Vista, CA

Beverly & Gerald Bergler, Grand Blanc

The Dashing Dozen, Berrien Springs
c/o Bertha Kubsch

Linda Cochran, San Carlos Park, FL

Jean Daniels, Riverside

Virginia DeFord, Stevensville

William O Eisenhart ERRV TR, Three Oaks

Penny Vollman & Cindy Knight, Three Oaks

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Alice & Elwynn Gillette, Scottsdale, AZ

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Jill D Rosier, Stevensville

Gladys Sandera & Mary Sundblad, Stevensville

Danny & Jeanne Sandmann & Family,

Buckley, IL

Joyce Stockman, Stevensville

Carol A Stockman, St Joseph

Douglas & Jacqueline Tiefenbach, Stevensville

Louie Vogl, Stevensville

Cheryl Weise, St Joseph

Katherine A Yonker, Coloma

In Memory of Mickey Campbell

John & Bea Breinling, Benton Harbor

Helene & Len Siewert, St Joseph

In Memory of Dr. Gale Cutter

Angelajo B & Joseph Naines, St Joseph

In Memory of Adrienne Eldridge

Debbie Kucera, Three Oaks

Gloria Priest

Priest Family Farm, Family of Bill Priest,

Larry, Sheila, Brenda & Brian, Three Oaks

George & Ruby Reitz, Union Pier

Bonnie, Bob & Darcy Sittig, Lincoln, NE

In Memory of Richard E Farrell

Margaret Farrell, Buchanan

In Memory of Marjorie Alice Hover

Lesley & Mel Bookout and Staff, Niles

Emily Conway, South Bend, IN

William Eagan, South Bend, IN

Robert E Keiser, Niles

League of Women Voters of South Bend Area,

South Bend IN

Michiana Paralegal Association, Inc.,

South Bend, IN

Jane Pomeroy, South Bend, IN

In Memory of Marvin & Raymond Kraft

Terry Kraft Moore, Lewisburg, TN

In Memory of Arthur Mashke

Mary Ann Mashke, St Joseph

In Memory of Charles McNees

Margaret Leonardo, South Bend, IN

Vincent H Pratt, Watervliet

In Memory of Florence Musgrove

Steven Conklin, St Joseph

In Memory of Dorothy Richmond

Robert & Judy Cronk, St Joseph

In Memory of Jan Robaska

Berrien Springs Blossom Queen Committee,

C/O Karol Kesterke, Berrien Springs

In Loving Memory - Continued

In Memory of Mary Eltzroth Rose

Ed & Cindy Alderman, Lawrence
Edith Elzroth, Lawrence
Barb & Mike Buckley, Lawrence
Shirley & Michael Lopriore, Lawrence

In Memory of Margaret Schuemann

Nina Dolezan, Coloma

In Memory of Karl Stelter

Customer Assistance & Technical Gast MFG,
Benton Harbor
Mel & Debbie Glover, Bangor

In Memory of Burt Stover

Helen Schmeichel, Niles
Glen & Jill Shoop, Berrien Springs

In Memory of Anna Tavalacci

Robert & Alora Davis, Coloma
Sharon LoPresti, Watervliet

In Memory of Lillian Svitil

Margaret Bembenek, Bridgman
Lodine Companion, Bridgman
Evelyn & Andrew Hall, Portage
Families of Victor & Irene Vukorpa,
Ellen & Jack Neal, Portage
University Housing Employees, Ann Arbor

In Memory of Tony Vince

Karol A Kesterke, Berrien Springs

In Memory of Della Ward

Karen Andrus, Berrien Springs
Mary Ellen Collier, Buchanan
Reta Homer, Buchanan
Dennis & Waneeta Ott, Galien
Warren & Retha Weaver, Buchanan
Jim & Dottie Wojahn, Buffalo, IN
Jill & Jason

In Memory of Clinton Wilson M.D.

Cheryl Weise, St Joseph

In Your Honor

During December 2007, donations were made by and in honor of the following people:

In Honor of Helen Braamse

Betty Ann Kesterke, Benton Harbor

In Honor of Wyndol & Chad Butler

Lue Butler, Sawyer

In Honor of James Ruhoff

Elizabeth & Vance VanderBurg, Niles

In Honor of Leslie Watts

Fred Watts, Stevensville

The Berrien County Cancer Service sends our sincere sympathy to all those who have recently lost loved ones. We thank all of our generous donors. Your donations are very much appreciated and will help cancer patients in Berrien County. Thank you!

Looking Ahead

BCCS SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville

February 5 & 19 – 1:30 p.m.

March 4 & 18 – 1:30 p.m.

BCCS SUPPORT GROUP – Niles

February 12 & 26 – 1:30 p.m.

March 11 & 25 – 1:30 p.m.

UOA SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville

February 19 – 1:30 p.m.

March 18 – 1:30 p.m.

19th Annual Pennies for Patients™ Day

Thursday – May 8, 2008

BCCS Bike Ride

Sunday – June 22, 2008

HELP, HOPE, BELIEVE

DATES TO REMEMBER IN FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 2nd – Groundhog's Day

Wednesday, February 6th – Ash Wednesday

Tuesday, February 12th – Lincoln's Birthday

Thursday, February 14th – Valentine's Day

Monday, February 18th – Presidents' Day

Friday, February 22nd – Washington's Birth.

**February is:
National Black History Month
American Heart Month**



Please Consider...

The Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc., is a non-profit organization funded primarily by the United Way, private donations and fund-raisers. We receive no Medicare, Medicaid or other insurance payments. To continue our free services to Berrien County cancer patients, we need your help. Any donation is greatly appreciated.

Donations to our General Fund will help balance our current budget. Donations to our Endowment Fund will help guarantee that the Cancer Service will be available for as long as needed. Your contribution to our non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation is tax deductible – an acknowledgment and receipt for tax purposes will be sent.

Donations can be made in honor of someone or in memory of a loved one. In these instances, we would also like to send acknowledgment to the honoree or next-of-kin so please provide that information when making your donation.

_____ **General Fund** _____ **Endowment Fund**

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

Donation Amount \$ _____

In Honor of _____

Honoree's Address _____

In Memory of _____

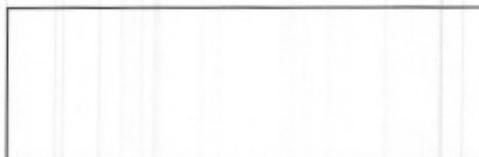
Next of Kin's Address _____

Thank you for your generosity!

Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc.
7301 Red Arrow Highway
Stevensville, MI 49127

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CANCER SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville Office

1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month - 1:30 p.m.

Berrien County Cancer Service, Inc.

7301 Red Arrow Highway
Stevensville, MI 49127

Phone: (269) 429-3281 or (269) 465-5257

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP – Niles

2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month – 1:30 p.m.

Niles Senior Center

1109 Bell Road
Niles, MI 49120

Phone: (269) 683-7460

BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Wednesday of each month - 2:00 p.m.

First Baptist Church

1446 E. Main Street
Niles, MI 49120

Phone: (269) 683-2959

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

2nd Thursday / month – 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Oncology Care Associates

820 Lester Avenue
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Phone: (269) 985-0029