



Cancer Support Group NEWSLETTER

www.bccancerservice.org

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.

June 2009

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

VOLUME XVIII ISSUE VI

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.

My Dad

When I was just a little one
No more than just a kid
I met a lot of special men
But none quite like my dad.
Though other men would often hear
The things I'd have to say,
None could listen with their heart
In Dad's very special way.
I love to think of all the things
He used to say and do,
And how I felt down in my heart,
I want to be like you.
If I could be just half the person
My father was to me,
What a great example I would be
For all the world to see.
The world would see a person who tried
To never fail the test,
Who never faltered in his quest
To always do his best.
They'd see a person who loved his God
Through times both good and bad,
What a person I would be if I could live
My life just like my dad.

Author unknown



what matters.™

When Chemo Brain Follows You Home

Author: Beth Leibson

Reprint Permission of **Coping** Magazine

We sat on comfy sofas talking about fainting. Passing out was frightening, embarrassing, and seemingly inevitable. Someone was listing the various places we, as a cancer support group, had lost consciousness: the workplace, the schoolyard, on the way home from chemotherapy.

Something about the last one got to me. “On the way home from chemo?” I said. “That must have been really rough.” With great kindness and patience, Jane turned to me. “That was you, Beth.”

Oh, yeah. Now I remember.

Chemo brain. It really does exist. Researchers suggest it is intermingled with fatigue and difficulty sleeping (yes, I am writing this at 3 o’clock in the morning), anemia (I swear, I am taking my iron supplements), and depression (how could a cancer diagnosis be uplifting?). And while chemo brain is an interesting phenomenon to read about on the front page of the newspaper, it’s scary when it follows you home from the chemo suite.

As a freelance writer and single mother, I live in fear that my kind and understanding editors will find out how many “to do” lists, checklists, and inventories litter my life. Or that I’ll forget where I put those lists. Or forget which one – for some reason I label them all “List” – relates to which aspect of writing, shopping, or taking care of my two children. I’ve considered making a list of my lists but, well, I’m just not organized enough to find them all simultaneously nor confident enough to be sure that the process would help.

I have trouble concentrating on more than one thing at a time. Which means that the apartment is plagued with half-completed projects: some of the dinner dishes are washed and dried while the cups and forks are still sitting on the table; the sheets and towels are folded and put away while the bed is strewn with newly laundered shirts and underwear. Not to mention the 20 minutes I spent the other day looking for the FedEx package I signed for while on the telephone. I generally try to avoid multi-tasking. But sometimes – when, for instance, an editor needs to discuss an assignment while a delivery person requires a signature simultaneously – it is unavoidable.

These days, I can’t just up and walk out of the apartment. First, I have to sit on my bed for a few minutes and stare into my tote bag. Do I have everything I will need to get through the day? Do I have my keys and a book to read on the subway? Have I remembered to put on both shoes and deodorant? And do my earrings match? (As a baldie, I do in the dangles to suggest that I am still a female.)

But chemo brain isn’t just about remembering various action steps. It can also compromise the ability to communicate. So I worry about losing all of my, oh, what are those words called, the ones for people, places, and things. Thus far, I seem to have retained my verbs, which is reassuring, if curious.

Equally odd, my fingers remember words better than my mouth thus far, so I type more clearly and precisely than I speak. Which is helpful professionally, though it does leave my children guessing which one is the thingamajig and which is the whatsit.

In an effort to combat word loss, I’ve gone back to crosswords, starting with the simpler ones and hoping to build up to more complex puzzles. I enjoy the challenge of piecing together the clues and filling in the little squares. I remember little tricks; for example, Ella Fitzgerald appears much more often than, say, Joni Mitchell. But these days, every blank space seems ominous rather than simply a testament to my lack of sports knowledge or entertainment lore. Each question left unanswered suggests frightening memory loss. I try to track my progress day to day, but can never quite recall whether I actually finished the previous crossword. Am I blocking the info or simply forgetting it?

Finally, I worry about the longevity of this brain deterioration. Will all my forgotten nouns arrive, gift-wrapped, a few months after I finish ingesting the dangerous chemicals that are saving my life? Will they drift back, one by one, in envelopes stamped “return to sender”? I find I am becoming more and more demanding. I want my life, my nouns, and my ability to perform multiple functions concurrently.

I would send an e-mail to my oncologist to ask him whether he thinks this hope is realistic, but I just can’t remember where I wrote down his e-mail address. Ah well, I guess I’ll know the answer soon enough.

Nervous System Changes via: NCI

What they are and why they occur

Chemotherapy can cause damage to your nervous system. Many nervous system problems get better within a year of when you finish chemotherapy, but some may last the rest of your life. Symptoms may include:

- Tingling, burning, weakness, or numbness in your hands or feet
- Feeling colder than normal
- Pain when walking
- Weak, sore, tired, or achy muscles
- Being clumsy and losing your balance
- Trouble picking up objects or buttoning your clothes
- Shaking or trembling
- Hearing loss
- Stomach pain, such as constipation or heartburn
- Fatigue
- Confusion and memory problems
- Dizziness
- Depression

Pain

What it is and why it occurs

Some types of chemotherapy cause painful side effects. These include burning, numbness, and tingling or shooting pains in your hands and feet. Mouth sores, headaches, muscle pains, and stomach pains can also occur.

Pain can be caused by the cancer itself or by chemotherapy. Doctors and nurses have ways to decrease or relieve your pain.

Skin and Nail Changes

What they are and why they occur

Some types of chemotherapy can damage the fast-growing cells in your skin and nails. While these changes may be painful and annoying, most are minor and do not require treatment. Many of them will get better once you have finished chemotherapy. However, major skin changes need to be treated right away because they can cause life-long damage.

Minor skin changes may include:

Itching, dryness, redness, rashes, and peeling

Darker veins. Your veins may look darker when you get chemotherapy through an IV.

Sensitivity to the sun (when you burn very quickly). This can happen even to people who have very dark skin color.

Nail problems. This is when your nails become dark, turn yellow, or become brittle and cracked. Sometimes your nails will loosen and fall off, but new nails will grow back in.

Major skin changes need to be treated right away because they can cause lifelong damage.

Major skin changes can be caused by:

Radiation recall. Some chemotherapy causes skin in the area where you had radiation therapy to turn red (ranging from very light to bright red). Your skin may blister, peel, or be very painful.

Chemotherapy leaking from your IV. You need to let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have burning or pain when you get IV chemotherapy.

Allergic reactions to chemotherapy. Some skin changes mean that you are allergic to the chemotherapy. Let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have sudden and severe itching, rashes, or hives, along with wheezing or other trouble breathing.

In Loving Memory

During April 2009, Memorial Donations were generously made by and for the following people:

In Memory of Catherine Appel

Kappa Theta Chi Sorority
% Linda Heil Treasurer, St Joseph
Marilyn Klann, St Joseph

In Memory of Minnie & Ernest Arent

Alma L Arent, St Joseph

In Memory of Jacki L Baker-Richard

Bonnie & Tom Imburgia, Cody WY

In Memory of Ralph Bizer

Steve & Amy Versaw, Chicago IL

In Memory of Jim Byers

Virginia G Byers, St Joseph

In Memory of Robert Churchill

Pete & Nancy Mrozek, New Buffalo
Brian & Christine Hull, New Buffalo
Cynthia Spriggs, New Buffalo

In Memory of Dominick Constantino

Deborah Eversole, Stevensville

In Memory of Esther B Demler

Cindy Brinker, Bridgman
Lillian K Demler, Eau Claire
Flora Hand, Benton Harbor
Marion Ladendorf, St Joseph
Ronald O Maier, Berrien Springs

In Memory of Betty J Fowler

Mr & Mrs Kenneth A Burger, Eau Claire

In Memory of Lamonte Hemphill

Connie & Dan Baber, Buchanan
Baroda Firemen
Wally & Dorothy Byrdak, LaPorte IN
C.H., St Joseph
Wayne & Barbara Doyle, Mishawaka IN
Deborah E Freehling, Three Oaks
Kurt & Christine Gerlach, Baroda
Susan Gombos, Granger IN
Don & Anne Goodenough, Galien
Roseola Jones, The University of Chicago-
U Chicago Tech Office, Chicago IL
Donna R Kelly, Granger IN

In Memory of Lamonte Hemphill (Cont)

The Richard Koziel Family, Granger IN
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Casey Lsoazel, Justice IL
Gerald & Denise Peterson, Stevensville
Elaine Pettke, Galien
Joan Redding, Galien
Charles & Chris Tidey, Buchanan
Mark & Cheryl Tollas, Baroda
Jerold & Kimberly Wojahn, Stevensville

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Janice Witkowski, Caledonia

In Memory of Katrina Lambe

Kleinheksel Farms, Holland

In Memory of John Mattson

Vincent & Louise Caropepe, Benton Harbor

In Memory of Kathleen Moffitt

Cindy Brinker, Bridgman

In Memory of Ed E Nelson

Mr & Mrs Austin Brown Jr., Donna Strebs,
Mr & Mrs Robert Brown, Mr & Mrs Bob Burchett
Evelyn Brown, St Joseph
Mr & Mrs James Dollar

In Memory of Florence S Orr

David S Pallas, Stevensville

In Memory of Roberta Otte

Carolyn Norton, Coloma

In Memory of Jennifer Polly

Jerry & Julie Koch, St Joseph

In Memory of Janet H Rodewald

Anne M Ward, Eau Claire

In Memory of David Schlutt

James & Annette Messinger, Weidman

In Memory of Mr Bruce Temple

Cynthia M Farrell, DVM, Colonie NY

In Loving Memory (continued)

In Memory of Mrs Marian Temple
Cynthia M Farrell, DVM, Colonie NY

In Memory of Michael R Thompson
Mary Jo & Jerry Goheen, Norwalk IA
Mary K Lavery, Buchanan
Ruby Schaffer, Buchanan

In Memory of Jean Veide
Dr. R Rademacher, Stevensville

In Memory of Evelyn M Walenga
Ethel C Carmichael, Niles

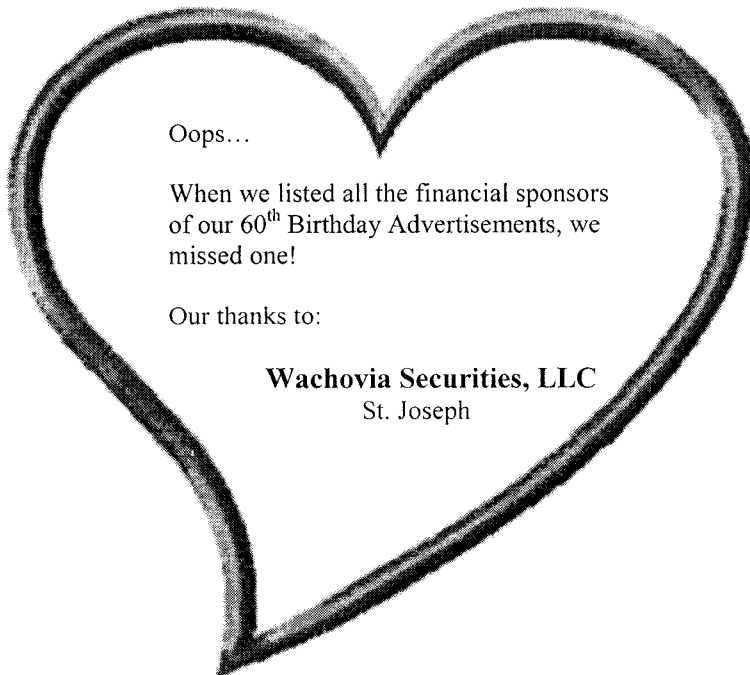
Berrien County Cancer Service sends our sincere sympathy to all those who have recently lost loved ones. We thank all of our generous donors. Your donations are very much appreciated and will help cancer patients in Berrien County. Thank you.

In Your Honor

In April 2009, donations were made by and in honor of the following people:

The wedding of Maria & Dirk Kruger

Pete and Nancy Mrozek, New Buffalo
Brian & Christine Hull, New Buffalo
Cynthia Spriggs, New Buffalo



Don't forget to join us for our
14th Annual

Berrien County Cancer Service Bike Ride

(Check out our insert!)

Sunday – June 28, 2009

Call (269) 429-3281

Or visit

www.bccancerservice.org

He Covered Her with His Love

Anyone who has pets will really like this. You'll like it even if you don't and you may even decide you need one!

Mary and her husband Jim had a dog named 'Lucky.'

Lucky was a real character. Whenever Mary and Jim had company come for a weekend visit they would warn their friends to not leave their luggage open because Lucky would help himself to whatever struck his fancy. Inevitably, someone would forget and something would come up missing.

Mary or Jim would go to Lucky's toy box in the basement and there the treasure would be, amid all of Lucky's other favorite toys. Lucky always stashed his finds in his toy box and he was very particular that his toys stay in the box.

It happened that Mary found out she had breast cancer. Something told her she was going to die of this disease....in fact; she was just sure it was fatal.

She scheduled the double mastectomy, fear riding her shoulders. The night before she was to go to the hospital she cuddled with Lucky. A thought struck her...what would happen to Lucky? Although the three-year-old dog liked Jim, he was Mary's dog through and through. If I die, Lucky will be abandoned, Mary thought. He won't understand that I didn't want to leave him! The thought made her sadder than thinking of her own death.

The double mastectomy was harder on Mary than her doctors had anticipated and Mary was hospitalized for over two weeks. Jim took Lucky for his evening walk faithfully, but the little dog just drooped, whining and miserable.

Finally the day came for Mary to leave the hospital. When she arrived home, Mary was so exhausted she couldn't even make it up the steps to her bedroom. Jim made his wife comfortable on the couch and left her to nap.

Lucky stood watching Mary but he didn't come to her when she called. It made Mary sad but sleep soon overcame her and she dozed.

When Mary woke for a second she couldn't understand what was wrong. She couldn't move her head and her body felt heavy and hot. But panic soon gave way to laughter when Mary realized the problem. She was covered, literally blanketed, with every treasure Lucky owned! While she had slept, the sorrowing dog had made trip after trip to the basement bringing his beloved mistress all his favorite things in life. **He had covered her with his love.**

Mary forgot about dying. Instead she and Lucky began living again, walking further and further together every day. It's been 12 years now and Mary is still cancer-free. Lucky, he still steals treasures and stashes them in his toy box but Mary remains his greatest treasure.

Remember.....live every day to the fullest. Each minute is a blessing from God. And never forget....the people who make a difference in our lives are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones that care for us.

If you see someone without a smile today give them one of yours! Live simply. Love seriously. Care deeply. Speak kindly. Leave the rest to God.

Looking Ahead

BCCS SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville

June 2 & 16 – 1:30 p.m.

July 7 & 21 – 1:30 p.m.

BCCS SUPPORT GROUP – Niles

June 9 & 23 – 1:30 p.m.

July 14 & 28 – 1:30 p.m.

UOA SUPPORT GROUP – Stevensville

June 16 – 1.30 p.m.

July 21 – 1:30 p.m.

RELAY FOR LIFE

Join the BCCS Team!

Saturday/Sunday

June 27/28 2009

14th ANNUAL BCCS BIKE RIDE

Sunday- June 28, 2009

HELP, HOPE, BELIEVE

DATES TO REMEMBER IN JUNE

June 14th – Flag Day

June 21st – Father's Day

June 21st – Summer Begins

Happy Father's Day!

Please Consider...

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.

Please remember us during the up-coming holiday season. 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 _____

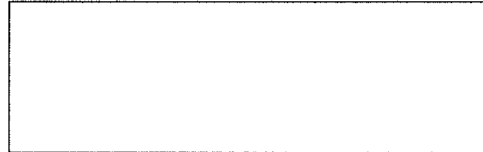
Next of Kin's Address _____

Thank you for your generosity!

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

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U.S. POSTAGE PAID
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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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

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 – 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

THE CANCER CONNECTION CAFE

1st Wednesday of each month

First United Methodist Church

132 S. Oak Street
Buchanan, MI 49107
Phone: (269) 695-2706

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

SNAPSHOTS OF BIKERS FOR BCCS

Our next “HEAD FOR THE HILLS” Bike Ride is on Sunday, June 28, 2009. We thought you might enjoy seeing some of our bikers in action.



BRADLEY CHURCH - This is Bradley’s 4th year of riding for BCCS. He likes the long rides and has done the 50-mile and 100K. Last year he decided to take his younger brother, Nathan, and rode the 15-mile with him. His mother, Nancy, is a nurse for BCCS.

NATHAN CHURCH - Last year Nathan rode the 15-mile with his brother Bradley and is looking forward to doing it again. His mom thought he might need help with going up the long hill on Singer Lake Road (and even met him with the van), but he worked hard and proved her wrong.



KATHY & ANDREA KARNIK - This is a mother-daughter team with Kathy being the BCCS office manager. Kathy says, “Don’t look for us on the 100K route, rather you’ll find us pushing our bikes up the hills and taking long breaks at the sag stops”.

DAVE RESCH - This ardent biker has ridden for every BCCS Bike Ride since its inception 14 years ago and faithfully collects pledges. Pay attention to the number on his jersey since it gives you a clue to his age. Look for him on the 100K with the number “85”.



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE BUT CAN’T RIDE, YOU MAY SPONSOR ONE OF THESE RIDERS BY CALLING BCCS AT (269) 429-3281 or 683-7460 TO MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT.

YOUR GIFT BENEFITS OUR PATIENTS HERE IN BERRIEN COUNTY.