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news



WITH YOU

we have provided 25 years of cancer care

THANK YOU

for giving
serving
volunteering
participating
and engaging

BECAUSE OF YOU

HopeWell will continue to be
a sanctuary
a gift
a home
a resource
a lifeline
a community
for the future

our mission

To create a community for all people with cancer, their families and friends, that encourages an exchange of information, the development of a support system and the presence of hope.

online

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HOPE

Where there is community... there is strength. Where there is strength... there is hope.

Remember "The Big C?"

Remember life before the Internet?

Remember when the pace was slower?

We do!

In 1993 when HopeWell opened its doors, cancer was "hush-hush" and, mostly, people didn't use that word. We were not afraid of it . . . in fact, we met it head-on. We set about changing people's experience of cancer. At HopeWell, participants discovered that "cancer was spoken here."

It took a certain amount of courage to come to this new cancer support experiment. At first, people found out about us by word of mouth. We actually put ads in the "Pennysaver" because people read the free publications to get information . . . there was no Internet. We talked on the phone more and wrote letters and cards. It felt more personal and took more time and, maybe, that wasn't so bad!

25 years ago, waiting for news of a diagnosis could take weeks. Pathology reports were often forwarded to a lab far away, by mail. Surgery, radiation, chemotherapy. That was it, for the most part. People seemed to go down one of two paths — towards recovery ("caught it early" "surgery was a success") or, an unexpected shortness of life.

Things have truly changed!

Medicine is fast, complex, technical and costly.

People are diagnosed quickly and the overload of information is immediate. Before you can comprehend that life will never be the same, you feel rushed into making overwhelming decisions.

Once you had a general practitioner who was the point person for all your care. Now it's common to have a medical oncologist, radiation oncologist, surgeon and, perhaps, a sub-specialty oncologist, physical therapist and pharmacologist. The list goes on and on.

Medicine has become unpredictably, often astronomically, expensive. Healthcare costs have skyrocketed. Because of advances in oncology, people are living longer with cancer as a chronic disease. And now, once again, a cancer diagnosis might prohibit one from having insurance coverage in the future.

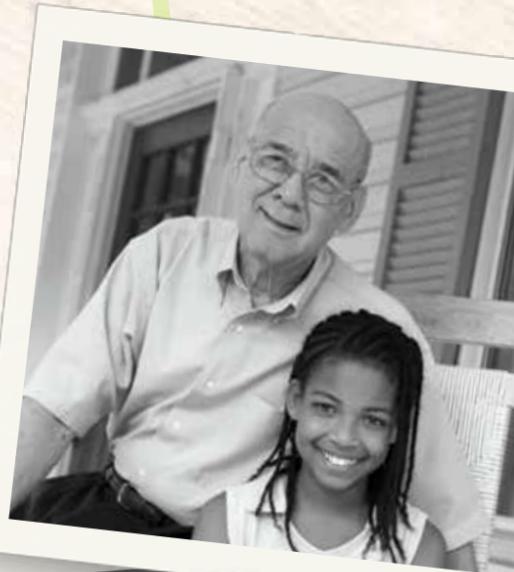
Yet, some things have remained the same.

People still respond to the words "You have cancer" with the thought "Will I die?"

At HopeWell, you are a person . . . not your diagnosis. Away from the busy medical world, we welcome you in, invite you to go at your own pace, find your own path.

In 1993 it might have been a radical notion—having a community based purely on people drawn together by the common thread of cancer. But it works. It's what people need.

Such a comfort, HopeWell.



Program Announcements

Dear HopeWell Community

Carole Sharp, our much-loved Program Director, will be leaving us at the end of the year.

As people often say, "You met me at the door and welcomed me in" and Carole's warm smile and inclusive spirit has greeted visitors more times than you could imagine. For over 13 years in her role of Program Director, Carole has brought her heart and expertise to HopeWell. Her devotion to our mission and to the people who come here is evident in the expansive and meaningful programs she has developed and nurtured.

We all wish Carole the very best of health and happiness as she enters this new chapter of life, and look forward to welcoming her back as a colleague and guest and friend.

Meet Teri Clayton

It was a unanimous choice! We are very pleased to announce our new Clinical Program Manager, Teri Clayton, LCSW-C.

Teri comes to HopeWell with a strong background in medical social work; specializing in the support of people living with serious chronic or life limiting illnesses. Prior employment has primarily been in nonprofit organizations, including Gilchrist, The ALS Association and Johns Hopkins Home Care/Hospice.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Teri.



KEY STAFF

Executive Director
Suzanne Brace

Program Director
Carole Sharp, LCSW-C

Patti Campbell
Teri Clayton
Joyleen Hamilton
Wanda Harrison
Thalia Large
Tom Large
Gwen Myers

HopeWell Cancer Support
10628 Falls Road • Lutherville, MD 21093

HopeWell Cancer Support is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. For a copy of our current financial statement, please contact HopeWell Cancer Support or the office of the Secretary of State, Annapolis, MD 21401.

A Letter from HopeWell

FROM SUZANNE BRACE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Writing this letter puts a smile in my heart . . .

This year HopeWell is celebrating a magnificent milestone!

It is simply astonishing to know that what started as a daring dream is flourishing 25 years later. From the beginning, we did this together . . . program by program, gift by generous gift. Where would we be without you!

HopeWell has so much to be grateful for.

I, too, have much to be grateful for.

In 1980, when much of oncology, as we know it, was in its infancy . . . I was diagnosed with cancer. Living in the Bay Area gave me access to the best medicine and, one would think, the best emotional support. Yet, when I turned to someone to talk to, a book to read, another person with cancer . . . there was nothing, no one, available.

The absence of what I needed changed the course of my life.

In search of an opportunity to help others, like me, be not so alone with their diagnosis . . . I trained as a therapist . . . managed the telephone hotline at NCI's Cancer Information Service . . . started a breast cancer information resource at Georgetown Medical Center.

These were incredible learning experiences, yet dispensing information about cancer was not meeting people's needs for a personal connection, for understanding.

In 1990 I had the great good fortune of meeting a remarkable group of people intent on bringing a California model of cancer support to Baltimore. Something clicked and together we set off on a path.

They had a pioneer spirit, became the first board and raised the money to get started, while I was invited to become the "expert" on what people with cancer might need.

Imagine the faith of those early donors! Investing thousands of dollars when they didn't even have a picture of what we might look like—just the steadfast belief that this community would forever change the experience of people with cancer. And it has.



HopeWell would simply not exist without the generosity of people like you who understand that people with cancer need more than just medicine.

Pat Brack knew that 25 years ago.

Judi Thomas echoes her words, 25 years later.

“It isn't easy to ask for money,”
people often say.

“It isn't easy to have cancer,”
is what I know.

HopeWell's current budget remains at \$1M even as the number of people we serve has grown. Our challenge, this year and in the future, is to invite more donors and greater giving.

Your generous gift will make certain that we continue to welcome all those who never expected to need HopeWell.

I continue to be amazed and touched by your loyalty and devotion. The deep roots of our organization—our mission and long-standing values—are solid and honest and true.

Let's keep doing this together!

With heartfelt gratitude,



Message from a Trial Balloon

(left to right) Pat Brack, Suzanne Brace, Patricia Schmoke, M.D.

I like HopeWell.

The name itself is hopeful.

— Judi Thomas, HopeWell Participant

I was taking PT at St. Joe's and I saw a HopeWell Happenings there. I noticed the classes – offered at no charge! One in particular caught my eye, but it was an “old” calendar. Still, that piqued my interest and I came to HopeWell.

When I pulled up in the parking lot, I happened to meet Carole and she embraced me like an old friend. Then I met Suzanne and she embraced me and introduced me to Sharon. And Sharon embraced me and held a drop-in Welcome Meeting just for me! I talked about my cancer. It was the first time I talked about my uncle who had passed from cancer in the 70's. I had hurt I had never dealt with.

The kind of cancer I have doesn't go away. I'll just keep having it. Cancer is the great equalizer. You had it. You have it. It impacts all of us. But, in terms of what it does to you emotionally, it's not equitable . . . people respond differently.

When you first hear your diagnosis, you don't know what to say, to ask, to feel. You don't know what you want. It made me feel distrusting of my own body. It took away a level of security . . . I didn't feel the confidence that I had before.

It made me think back. The Big C, the loneliness, the imposed isolation. People responding as if it was contagious. Not knowing what to say to you.

It made me think about my cancer people. I lost a couple of close friends,

mentors, lots of people . . . my uncle. My people could have used a spot here at HopeWell.

I like HopeWell. The name itself is hopeful. I felt I was part of this place when I first came here . . . at my first encounter in the parking lot.

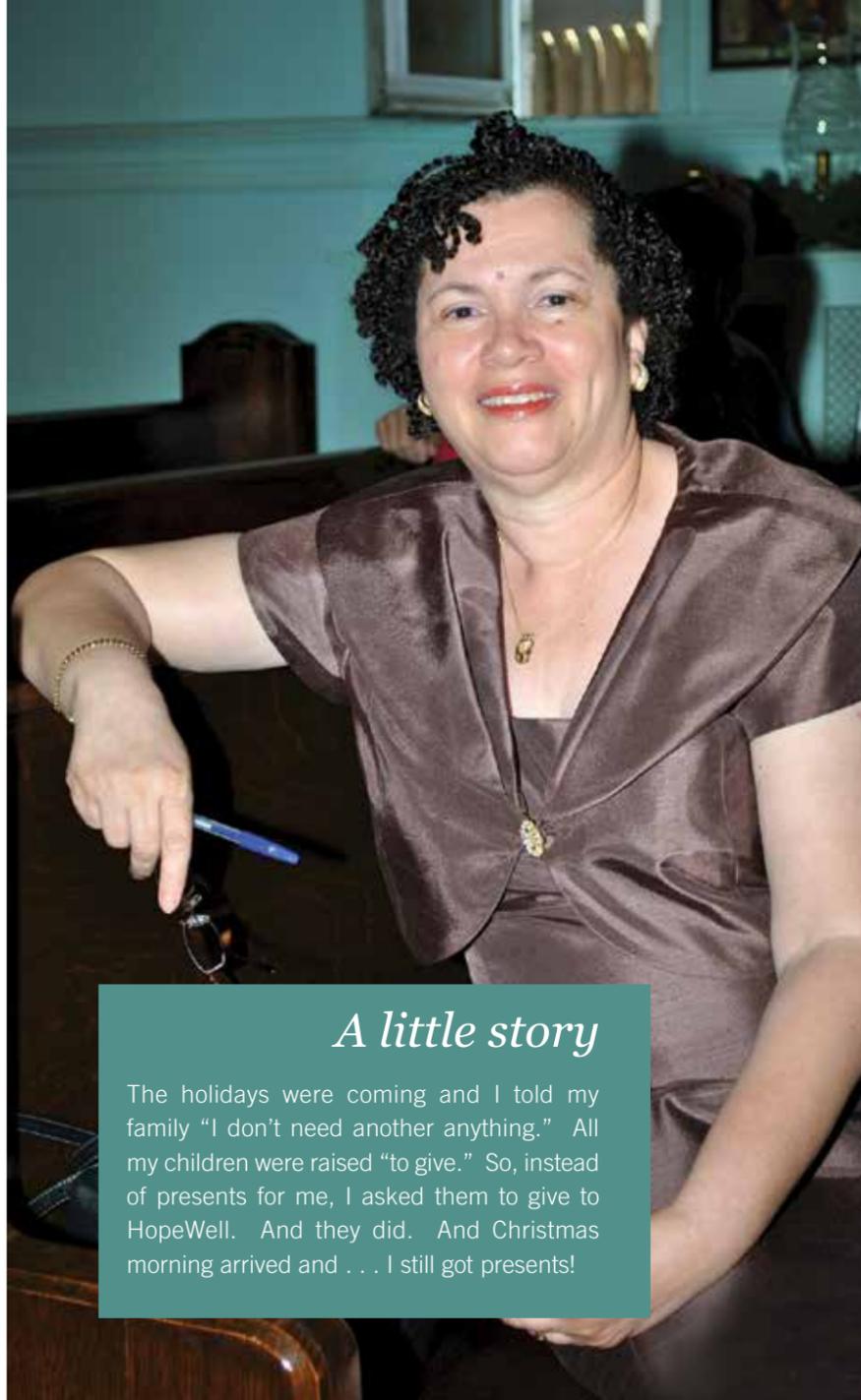
What HopeWell has to offer is so valuable. It has become my equalizer of resources. Just coming here – to be with people, to talk with people – makes the playing ground a little smoother. It's such an inviting environment. It's restoration.

I think about the many women I have met at HopeWell. How our life perspectives have changed. How we learn from each other . . . the essence of every moment. My experience here has not only added sanity, but given humanity to my life. Because you receive hope, you become well – not healed – you become well. I was working towards “I am well.” To reach a level of peace.

Why do I give to HopeWell?

With cancer it's not IF, but WHEN. Perhaps those in the “if” category need to support those in the “when” category. HopeWell's services are so very much needed. Vital services, welcoming services for all. There are no conditions for people who want to participate.

I support HopeWell financially because they are honest with my money and they do what they say they're going to do.



A little story

The holidays were coming and I told my family “I don't need another anything.” All my children were raised “to give.” So, instead of presents for me, I asked them to give to HopeWell. And they did. And Christmas morning arrived and . . . I still got presents!

Others like giving to others' wellbeing but sometimes don't know how or where to start. There are many ways to be creative about giving. You might not have \$100 to give – so ask twenty people to give \$5.

If you have a little bit and they have a little bit. And that person, too, has a little bit. Put those three little bits together and you have something good!

Every gift counts . . . it really does.

Written in 1993 by Pat Brack, this communiqué appeared in our very first newsletter.

Way back (it seems now) in November 1990, I was approached by several people to come to a reception to discuss an ambitious idea this group was proposing to bring to our area. Free support to cancer patients and their families! I remembered the loneliness of my original diagnosis with cancer and what a help it would have been to us to have that resource in our community. I thought how great this could be for other people and how much I would like to be able to help make it a reality.

In 1992, my commitment to this organization became a bit more personal when my own cancer reappeared. Suddenly there was more invested in seeing it up and running, although I must admit I wasn't sure I'd want to spend too much time there myself – what with “all those cancer patients!” I like to think of myself as part of the “well world,” after all.

As the start-up date approached, I was irresistibly drawn to this cancer support community. The space itself is so open and each time one goes, the progress in decorating and comfort grows. It is fun to watch the rooms come alive with pictures, chairs, plants and, most of all, with people. A diverse and active group, it is hard to tell who is staff and who is patient (oops, participant). The cancer survivors who are drawn here are survivors indeed, willing to share some of the experience, willing to share hope, solace, humor – along with yoga, Tai Chi, and a cup of excellent decaf (brewed by Tom, I understand).

The first yoga class made me feel that I had come home. We students were a mixed bag, but the gentleness of the movement and the teacher made the world, at least for me, a restful, lovely place for a while. The staff manages the incredible task of running the place smoothly while making it seem that

there are no hassles in making all of this happen. There is no feeling of US or THEM; we are all people involved in the business of quality of life. The staff members make this whole thing happen without any feeling of self-importance or ego. They are pleased that we are there. They let us know we are cared about.

The founding board has put the financial pieces together in a remarkably short time. They have spent countless hours of hands-on participation for this community without even seeing most of the people who need and will get comfort from their efforts. Each participant, board member, staffer and volunteer embraces the human connection – doing what needs to be done to make this community succeed.

Coming here, I don't feel like a visitor. I feel like I've found a second home, a safe haven between the well world where I am busy, active and working, and the frightening world of bone scans, MRI's, hospital and doctor visits. In this place I can rest, find friendship and understanding and gather the energy to continue to live my life to the fullest. Far from the anticipated “sick people,” I've met a vibrant group of people determined to give life their best shot. There is an understanding between people that goes beyond words, though most of us do not suffer from shyness!

This is just the beginning. We participants are the “trial balloon” in Baltimore, the pioneers. We'll be out there spreading the word with deep gratitude for all of you who made this safe, warm place a reality.

— Pat Brack

Ribbon cutting, April 1993

Pat Brack came into our lives just as we were getting started. She served on the original organizing committee and was the first participant board member – the voice of expertise about living with cancer. Most of all she was a friend and a teacher who gave us the immeasurable gift of her candid day-to-day experiences . . . our “first lessons” on living and dying.

Together, with the generous support of individuals like you, we've built something wonderful . . .

- The first participant-centered model of oncology support of its kind on the East Coast.
- The only fully comprehensive program of psychosocial cancer care in the greater Baltimore region.
- A truly diverse, dynamic and thriving community bound together by the experience of cancer.
- An enduring, independent nonprofit . . . a home of our own, a beautiful sanctuary.

. . . and we're not done yet envisioning this extraordinary place we all call **HopeWell**



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Welcoming
Caring &
Supporting for
25 years

NOTICE SOMETHING **DIFFERENT?**

We're always looking for ways to make your donations to HopeWell go further. To save money and time, we combined our two traditional fall mailings into one, so this isn't just a newsletter. **Look inside!** Find your personal copy of Marsha Hammond's HopeWell-inspired art. And before you hang it on the wall or frame it, flip it over. **We are asking for your support before the end of the year.** HopeWell is a community of individuals, and every single one of us makes a difference. Mail your donation in the enclosed envelope or donate online at hopewellcancersupport.org.

A GIFT TO HOPEWELL TODAY IS A
GIFT OF HOPE FOR TOMORROW

