

April 23, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It takes more than high-quality caregivers to battle a life-threatening disease like cancer. It takes a community.

At NCH, in the fight against cancer and other crippling diseases, we have enormously generous supporters who assist. Let me point out just a few of the most generous.

Ten years ago, we embarked on a campaign to upgrade our care for patients with cancer—a disease that affects one of four Americans. We were so grateful when **Raymond Lutgert** and his son, **Scott Lutgert** along with their wonderful families provided the funds to build the twin Lutgert Cancer buildings on the downtown campus.

In 2001, two other extraordinary friends, **Suzanne and Bob Chute**, created the Magnolia Ball. Every other year, the Magnolia Ball has raised funds—\$4 million—for cancer research and to care of patients at NCH. This past Saturday night, more than 200 patrons raised close to \$1 million, to furnish a state-of-the-art outpatient infusion center downtown and create four “*Magnolia Suites*” in the **William and Susan Dalton** Oncology Unit on 4-South. Each suite will contain a small dining and recreation area to complement the regular hospital room furnishings and equipment. These special rooms will be used for patients undergoing chemotherapy, who may be confined to their hospital room for a prolonged period. In this way, our generous donors help create a more comfortable environment, as patients face one of life’s greatest challenges.

Beyond these selfless efforts, this past weekend many other neighbors in southwest Florida were involved with raising funds and awareness for cancer in the *Relay for Life*. Friday night featured Susan Theroux, Oncology Director, and her team, including Kathleen Coppola, Elaine Fessler, Terry Guadi, Barbara Hardy, Michelle Higgins, Jennie McGraw, Barbara Phelps, Linda Roeback, Diana Trupiano, Mary Trupiano, and Walter Sanford, some of which managed the NCH tent at Gulfview Middle School’s all-night event. All of this generosity has helped us produce promising results in the battle against cancer.

For one thing, we continue to improve our delivery of care. More of our medical oncologists and radiation therapists have offices on or next to the downtown campus of NCH. Florida Cancer Specialists will be seeing patients in Lutgert West starting tomorrow. For the past year, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Oncology has been treating patients in Lutgert East. The Naples Medical Center oncologists have been good neighbors for decades. In addition, we have had all diagnostic radiology services for years on campus, including one of the first PET/CTs. Finally, thanks to the support of the Magnolia Ball, we will now be able to bring back a downtown infusion center, which also will add to patient convenience.

As to quality, our NCH cancer program has earned three-year accreditation by the American College of Surgeons. This “*Good Housekeeping seal of approval*” given to only one in four programs helps validate that our educational programs, including a weekly cancer conference where patient cases are discussed with dozens of physicians as well as our registry of treatments and outcomes, conforms to the best practices available anywhere in the country.

The most heartwarming proof that our cancer program is working is the fact that there are so many survivors living normal lives, thanks to the quality care they have received at NCH. That reality is the true measure of the success that joins highly competent caregivers with extraordinarily generous contributors in our community.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P. S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at [allen.weiss@nchmd.org](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.