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was told that my type of cancer usually comes back with a high score. The day before my port was to be put in for my first treatment of chemo, the results from my Oncotype DX test came back showing "low risk." In other words: no chemo.

On Dec. 1, I had my breast reconstruction surgery with Dr. Paul Smith. He is a true artist, and I am amazed at the results. The breast cancer patients at Moffitt are true warriors. We face this beast with strength and integrity and at the end of the day, our faith is with Moffitt in providing us with the best surgeons and doctors. The Doctors and staff at Moffitt are second to none.

I am enrolled at USF working on my master's degree in reading education. I have two wonderful kids. I just started playing soccer again and I am in the process of getting back to a workout schedule. I am fortunate to have family, friends, and colleagues who have supported me throughout this experience.

**Get Connected  
Stay Connected**

## Bowling "Ball" - worst to third

by Bill Swisher

More than 200 people came out to eat, drink, schmooze, network, help fight prostate cancer and -- oh, yes -- BOWL at Splitsville in Tampa on Feb. 18.

The 2009 Bowling Ball raised upwards of \$18,000 for research at Moffitt Cancer Center, thanks to the members of 19 corporate teams and the 123 "Pin Heads" who cheered them on.



**Moffitt Pinellas Partners Team**

Moffitt Pinellas Partners came close to fulfilling the "Worst to First" promise on its T-shirts, as it finished third this year after placing dead last in 2008. The top two spots at last month's event went to teams from New York Life and USAmeriBank.

"We've had a lot of sponsors who came back for the second year and a number of new ones," said Shaina Sine, associate director of Annual Giving at the Moffitt Foundation. "That just goes to show the word is getting out—it's a fun event. The excitement and energy are still there, and we look forward to an even better event next year."

The Tampa Bay Rays were a major presence this year, sponsoring both a lane and a bowling team. They also donated a prize package that was raffled off and included game tickets, pre-game VIP passes, caps and other goodies. Aaron Cohn, director of Corporate Partnerships for the Rays, served as Bowling Ball co-chair along with Katherine Frazier of Hill Ward Henderson, who chairs Moffitt Hillsborough Partners.

Suzanne Murchland, the Rays' director of Community Relations, pointed out that the team partners with Moffitt in many other ways, including...

- Free skin-cancer screenings at six Spring Training sites

around Florida

- Sponsorship of and teams racing in the Miles for Moffitt fundraiser

- "Miles for Moffitt Night" at the Trop to raise awareness about this year's race

- Rays jersey raffles and auctions throughout the season

The team's efforts have raised about \$47,000 for Moffitt Cancer Center, Murchland said.



**Tampa Bay Rays Team**

The Bowling Ball, according to more than one attendee, is quickly becoming the "must-attend" event for Tampa Bay area residents who are both party-savvy and have variable bowling skills.



## Pinellas Partners

### Pinellas Athletics show major support for Moffitt

As the World Champion Phillies and the American League Champs, the Tampa Bay Rays, concentrate on their upcoming seasons, there has been unwavering support for the community and especially for Moffitt. The Phillies organization are in the early stages of planning a "Pinellas Partners for Moffitt Day" and the Rays are gearing up for their "Florida Bank, Miles for Moffitt" night. During the Rays/White Sox game April 16, they will be honoring cancer survivors.



The support that pours in from these organizations and many others are amazing. It truly is a testimonial to the giving nature of Pinellas County and the relationships developed through the years.

The most elegant event of the year **The Magnolia Ball, April 25**, is just around the corner. Get your tuxedos and red carpet gowns ready to boogie with the Beach Boys. See our "Upcoming Events" section for more details. Many Pinellas Partners members will be attending and we thank you all for your support.

Sincerely,  
Marsha Droste  
Moffitt Pinellas Partners co-chair

### Olivia Newton-John



Singer and actress Olivia Newton-John joined the national advisory board for the Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute in Tampa. In this role, Newton-John will help raise awareness of the center and provide counsel as a Moffitt ambassador.

Sam Donaldson, formerly of ABC News, chairs the board.

Since her recovery from breast cancer since 1993, Newton-John has been an active advocate of cancer prevention and awareness.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

"Florida Bank Miles for Moffitt" Night with the Tampa Bay Rays  
Thursday, April 16, 7 p.m.  
Tropicana Field, St. Pete

**Magnolia Ball**  
with the Beach Boys  
Saturday, April 25  
Contact Kathy Werner  
813-745-1340  
Kathy.Werner@MOFFITT.org

**Miles for Moffitt**  
Saturday, May 9, 7:30 a.m.  
USF Dome

### Steering Committee Members

- Scott Andringa
- Brian Aungst
- Rob Bauer
- Ernestine Bean
- Beverly Billiris
- Bruce Bokor
- Joe Burdette
- Aaron Cohn
- Gary Conners
- William Crown
- Jodie Cunningham
- Ed & Marsha Droste
- Holly Duncan
- Ron & Ann Duncan
- Jackie Edgington
- Larry Feder
- Fred Fisher
- Doug Graska
- Lucy Grinnell
- Bob "Gator" Handley
- Lindsay Hardee
- Mary Harvey
- Bill Maher
- Judy Mitchell
- Pam Muma
- Bob Passwaters
- Ron Petrini
- David Ruppel
- Leslie Schipani-Anderson
- Karen Seel
- Julie Shannon
- Covington Sharp
- Gary Skinner
- Laverne Smith
- Richard Spayde
- Susan Stern
- Bill Swisher
- Dan Walker
- Gregory Wright

## A miracle of science

By Bill Swisher

A physician in South Florida has been able to end nine years of regular blood transfusions, thanks to groundbreaking treatment at Moffitt Cancer Center.

Dr. Jean Samimy is a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology practicing in the Coral Gables area. About nine years ago, a routine exam in Miami showed him to be anemic. Extensive tests revealed it was a disorder of the bone-marrow stem cells called myelodysplastic syndrome.

"I consulted M.D. Anderson in Houston and Memorial Sloan-Kettering [cancer centers] in New York," Dr. Samimy said. "They all concurred with the diagnosis, although the treatment was very different depending on the institution. For a good period they just tried different classical treatments."

Nothing worked, but one thing was constant: Dr. Samimy had to receive blood transfusions "every 10 to 14 days," a part of the treatment that would consume "more than 500 units of blood" over the next nine years, he said.

He had to reduce

his medical practice to three days a week and couldn't perform surgery, deliver babies or do anything else that would require prolonged standing.



*Alan F. List, M.D.*

In 2004 Dr. Samimy's Miami hematologist met Dr. Alan List, Moffitt's executive vice president and physician-in-chief, in California at a conference about the disease. The hematologist "came back and said, 'You ought to go and see Dr. List at Moffitt. He has a lot of studies going on about this disease,'" Dr. Samimy said.

He was a candidate for several drug trials Dr. List was testing, so Dr. Samimy consented to join them. For the next nine months, the pair tried four different drugs without suc-

cess. Dr. Samimy's disease "didn't respond, although some of the patients in these trials did respond and were transfusion-free for a period of time," he said.

Dr. Samimy's blood transfusions continued. "It was a major hassle because when you transfuse the blood, you destroy the red blood cells but the iron stays in your system. That can damage your liver, spleen, pancreas and heart muscle," he said. So he also received therapy to reduce that danger—injections that meant he had to be connected to a pump for 12 hours every night.

That corrected the iron problem, but the main disease continued unchecked. Eventually Dr. List suggested trying methotrexate, a medication normally used to treat other forms of cancer. After four weeks his body began to respond. After five months things still looked hopeful, but Dr. Samimy developed pneumonia, a rare complication of taking methotrexate. He stopped while he was hospitalized for the pneumonia.

Then something remarkable happened:

His myelodysplasia continued to improve even while he was off the drug.

"That was really a wonderful result, but how it worked was very mysterious. We don't know exactly," Dr. Samimy said. He consulted Dr. List.

"We went over all the numbers and he said, 'You have a cytokine [of the disease] that we have already isolated. The other medications didn't work, but it looks like methotrexate took care of this problem. You're cured.' For six months now, I haven't received any blood transfusions at all, and my hemoglobin went up by itself, without any medication," Dr. Samimy said.

He is, of course, very happy, both with the results and with the provider.

"Dr. List was very persistent. People from all over the world come to see him. Hopefully this will be the beginning of a new treatment, at least for some sub-group of patients" with the syndrome, Dr. Samimy said.

"This really was a miracle of science."

## A personal story

By Carol Connelly

I play soccer, run, lift weights, work tirelessly as a single mom, work two, sometimes three jobs to make ends meet and I have... no health insurance. I have always been consistent with my mammograms, which I receive through the Mammography Voucher Program (MVP).

On April 4, a biopsy from the results of a questionable mammogram revealed invasive ductile carcinoma in my right breast. I was shocked and sad in that I felt that my body had betrayed me. As a result of my biopsy, it was hard to keep my arms up and that rendered me unable to work. MVP referred me to the Pinellas County Health Program, which referred me to one of their surgeons that would provide me with a mastectomy with no reconstruction. Although the federal government mandates insurance carriers to provide a woman with the option of breast reconstruction, the county program does not, and the MVP program does not have the funds. Thankfully, be-

fore the county program suffered a huge budget cut by the state this past October, I was able to get a referral from the county surgeon who was not comfortable treating my cancer, to go to Moffitt Cancer Center.

I met with Dr. John Kiluk, a surgeon at the Moffitt Breast Center. The first words out of his mouth were, "Do not worry about anything" and that his job is first, to eradicate the cancer and second, to make me look good. He presented to me my options based on my pathology reports and it was my choice how to approach the surgical aspects of the treatment. Dr. Kiluk ordered bone and cat scans.

In retrospect, I know that my breasts do not define me. However, a wave of nostalgia swept over me as I remembered breast-feeding both my children and thought about my figure flattering collection of vintage dresses. My reality was to get rid of the cancer and I will deal with my emotional and physical trauma later.



*Carol Connelly in her LaFrance vintage dress*

The pre-surgical MRI revealed a small mass in the left breast and the cancerous breast had a lot of tissue affected. I opted for no radiation and that variable alone suggested a bilateral mastectomy with immediate reconstruction with tissue expanders. It would be one week after surgery before I would have the final pathology from the lymph node biopsy that was taken pre op.

My lymph test came back negative, but my HER 2 expressions were positive and the grade 3 invasive tumor would require adjuvant treatment that would include chemotherapy. My cancer team ordered an additional test that is used for cancers like mine to determine the potential effect of chemo on cancer cells that might be hiding somewhere else in my body. I

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