

A Personal Story

By John Freeman

There were no symptoms—just a little non-specific middle back pain. I thought I must have stretched wrong at the gym or twisted my back while on a ladder. The first doctor's exam turned up nothing. A month later, when I asked the doctor to please check again, a slight flinch during an abdominal hands-on exam sent the medical complex in motion. A quickly-ordered CT scan revealed a mass on my pancreas with possible involvement of the spleen, large intestines and left kidney.

The surgeon determined the disease to be widespread, malignant and inoperable. Two masses were found, the spleen was involved and many local lymph nodes appeared malignant. When I awoke, I was given the diagnosis of Stage IV metastatic pancreatic cancer.

"There is no cure. You have anywhere from six to 18 months to live," the surgeon told me. Simply put, I didn't



John Freeman at the Magnolia Ball

like this diagnosis and neither I nor my family was going to buy it. It was time to find the best medical center with the brightest doctors who share my drive to beat this disease. Following intense research, we landed with two of the best centers in the world and Moffitt was one of them.

The positive, can-do attitude from the Moffitt staff is something that cannot be taught. The culture is pervasive and natural. Everyone is actively engaged in fighting cancer; everyone knows the mission. With this level of human en-

gagement and real caring, there is no way that we cannot be successful. More than three years later, my family is looking forward to the day when my pancreatic cancer is just a footnote in an otherwise full, productive life.

John Freeman shared his story live at this year's Magnolia Ball. This version is an excerpt from the Spring 2007 issue of Legacy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tampa Bay Rays
Moffitt Kids Clinic**
Saturday, June 13 and
Saturday, August 22
Tropicana Field, St. Pete
Contact Dan Minor
813-745-3192

Martinis for Moffitt
Thursday, July 16
Grand Hyatt, Tampa Bay
Contact Jason Levy
813-963-6701

**Skanska/Moffitt
Golf Classic**
Monday, September 28
USF Dome, Tampa
Contact Sharon Hasting
813-745-4327

Magnolia Ball

Raises \$2.4 Million During Tough Times

Moffitt Cancer Center champions are known for their strong will to fight cancer and on Saturday, April 25, nothing—not even the nation's financial challenges—could stop them. Six-hundred and fifty guests raised \$2.4 million for patient care, research and education. Contributions also will benefit the Magnolia Lodging Program, which gives patients and their family accommodations close to Moffitt when they are undergoing long stays, regardless of their ability to pay.

"The fact that we raised \$2.4 million in this environment is just astounding," said Larry Feder, the vice president of the Moffitt Foundation. "There is no recession when it comes to cancer. Moffitt donors are committed to making an investment for life at Moffitt."

Richard and Melanie Gonzmart of Columbia Restaurant chaired the ball. Entrepreneur and philanthropist Dave Lageschulte was the honorary chair. Magnolia Ball Platinum sponsors were Ted and Marty Couch; Kraft Construction Company, Inc.; Jim and Barbara Morrison; Pam and Les Muma; Rooms To Go Children's Fund; Helen and James Rosburg; Shumaker, Loop, Kendrick, LLP; and Don & Erika Wallace Family Foundation.



Pinellas Partners

Keeping You "In the Loop"

Welcome to the June/July edition of the Pinellas Partners newsletter. One of our goals is to keep Pinellas County informed about the amazing staff, research and fundraising at Moffitt Cancer Center. Your interest and participation, even through these tough times, have been overwhelming, proving that people still have questions about where to go or what to do next if they or their loved ones receive news that they have cancer. We feel that participation in groups like Pinellas Partners gives us an opportunity to not only give back and help an institution that continues to save lives, but to arm us with information that may be used one day for a friend, a loved one, or even ourselves.

We update our Web site bimonthly with articles, events and personal stories. One important section to check out is our Cancer Screening Guide. There you will find screening guidelines for your specific age and gender for all types of cancer. Please visit our Web site at www.pinellaspartners.com or Moffitt's site, MOFFITT.org. Early detection is one very important step in beating this terrible disease.

We hope to see you at one of our next informative events. Thank you for being a member of Pinellas Partners.

Sincerely,
Marsha Droste
Pinellas Partners co-chair

Miles for Moffitt

The Original Motley Crew—Members of Moffitt Pinellas Partners and assorted hangers-on look none the worse for wear after completing the "Miles for Moffitt" 5K walk in Tampa May 9. The team finished the course in 1 hour 2 minutes and an unknown number of seconds, but who was counting?



Steering Committee Members

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- Brian Aungst
- Rob Bauer
- Ernestine Bean
- Beverly Billiris
- Bruce Bokor
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- Aaron Cohn
- Gary Conners
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- Ron & Ann Duncan
- Jackie Edgington
- Larry Feder
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- Lucy Grinnell
- Bob "Gator" Handley
- Lindsay Hardee
- Mary Harvey
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- Bill Swisher
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Get Connected
Stay Connected

Arts In Medicine

By Bill Swisher



The Arts In Medicine Team

At Moffitt Cancer Center, caring for patients with cancer takes place through traditional medicine and a lot more.

One of Moffitt's more uncommon forms of therapy is called the Arts In Medicine Program, a part of the Psychosocial and Palliative Care Program.

"When we bring the arts to patients, it's not meant to heal them but to create a sense of wellness," said Cheryl Belanger, the program's coordinator. "We're not therapists, though our care is given for therapeutic reasons."

The Arts In Medicine Program started at Moffitt in 1998 with one paid employee. Today, in addition to Belanger, it has six artists-in-residence, including three musicians and a

poet, plus a host of volunteers.

Through a series of events known as open art studios and workshops, the program offers patients the chance to experience and participate in five types of artistic endeavors:

- Visual arts, including watercolor painting, origami, marbling and painting on silk.
- Poetry and the written word.
- Improvisational theater, through a group known as Echoes.
- Movement, especially a simplified form of tai chi called Shimbashi, which was developed in Japan in the 1960s.
- Music, which Belanger said is "a part of almost everything we do here."

The studios "create a sense of comfort, of relaxation, and of well-being," she said. The most common reaction to the program: "The patients who have had some connection to the arts are happy to discover that we consider it important. The ones who have never considered something like this on their journey to wellness are delighted to find it has helped them on that journey."

Many of the patients' efforts, from folded-paper cranes—a symbol of healing, Belanger said—to patient stories written with the help of a poet-in-residence, are on display in the Arts In Medicine studio on the third floor of the Moffitt Clinic Building. Others can be seen in the Healing Arts Gallery on the fourth



Judy and Wendy

floor.

All of the studio experiences can be taken to the bedside, she said.



Shannon and Derry

That's especially true of music; two of the musicians-in-residence spend at least two-thirds of their time in patients' rooms. Belanger puts her own vocal and autoharp abilities to work "in lobbies and occasionally at bedside. We'll walk onto a [ward], and nurses will go, 'Oh, you came to play for us?'"

As in all of Moffitt's programs, the main focus is clear, Belanger said.

"Everything we do is for the patients, family and staff because we're all involved with the difficult struggle of fighting cancer. We're all about, 'What can I do to help you? How can I make you feel more comfortable?' This is just another piece of giving the patient total health care."

Don, a life of hope; Moffitt, a place of hope

By Mary Harvey, co-chair

I wish that all of the personal stories we bring to you in our newsletters could have happy endings. Unfortunately, with a disease such as cancer, not all stories end well.

My brother, Don Carey, lost his courageous battle with cancer on March 28 after five long and brutal years. He didn't have just one form of the disease but two, each one aggressive and each one deadly. It is unusual for someone with a dual diagnosis such as Don's to live as long as he did; it is my firm belief that it was the treatment and the care he received at Moffitt Cancer Center that gave him those extra few years. He fought the battle with his whole heart and soul and never gave up until he took his last breath.

I must admit, during the last several months as I watched my brother suffering and in terrible pain, constantly sick and weakened by the chemo, I wondered many times, "Why are we doing this? Why do we believe a cure is possible and that any of these new treatments are going to bring an end to this suffering? Why do we put our loved ones and their families through

this agony, only to lose them in the end anyway?"

The answer came to me one night a week before he died, as I sat at his bedside watching him slowly slip away. Even then, after losing his bladder, a lung and a leg to cancer, he was still asking me if there was a drug trial at Moffitt that he could participate in. That's when it struck me: We can never give up or stop believing in a cure because the patients don't give up. They are hopeful and they believe in a cure right up until they take their last breath. They are willing to endure anything—drugs that make them sick for days or weeks on end, treatments that burn their skin and make their hair fall out, brutal surgeries that leave them without body parts or organs—anything, just to have the chance to live a little while longer.

I had to ask myself, if these patients can go through all of that and still have hope, how can we not do everything in our power to support the research that goes into new treatments—treatments that someday will give the person with a cancer diagnosis the

chance to live the full life that we all long for, the life my brother so longed for?

As I look back on this experience and all that has happened, I am truly amazed by where this journey has taken us. We are a very close family. When something happens to one of us, it happens to all of us. Because of that, we have spent a lot of time together over these past five years. Much of it has been in the rooms and hallways of Moffitt Cancer Center.

Over the years those hallways have become a gathering place for my family and for many other families who bond together over their mutual suffering and fear. It is a place where we have laughed and cried, a place where we have prayed for and received miracles and it is a place where we have been touched by kindness, compassion and hope...always hope....

This experience has brought a new depth to our lives and to our relationships with one another. While it is one of the most difficult things we have endured as a family, it has also brought us closer together and made each of us a

better, more compassionate person.

So, in honor of my brother Don, I will continue to believe that a cure is near and I will keep fighting for the research to find it. I will tell anyone who will listen about Moffitt Cancer Center and the work they are doing in the fight for the prevention and cure of cancer.

I will tell them of the kindness and compassion of the nurses and physicians who cared for my brother and all of the other patients who pass through those doors every day. I will do whatever I can, whenever I can, to advance this fight. I owe that much to my brother and to all of the patients and families who are struggling with this disease right now. I owe that much to Moffitt Cancer Center for the extra years they gave my brother and our family.

My hope is that you, too, will get involved, start asking questions, share what you learn with your friends and be proactive in the fight against this deadly disease. There is an end in sight but there is still so much to be done and we need your help.