

# cancer care

Hearst Cancer Resource Center

 **Dignity Health.**  
French Hospital Medical Center

Hearst Cancer Resource Center

## *About Cancer Care*

*Hearst Cancer Resource Center at French Hospital Medical Center provides comprehensive support services for all cancer patients in our community at no charge, and appreciates the generosity of our donors who make it all possible.*

## Bridging the Gap Between Care and Compassion

*By Amy Spain, breast cancer survivor*

The year 2020 was challenging for people across the world as the COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted our lives. Midway through the year, Central Coast resident Amy Spain (pictured here) found a lump in her breast and faced a situation made more complex due to the lockdown. However, was able to find the resources and medical help needed at the start of her journey.

In July 2020, Amy was diagnosed with third stage lobular carcinoma, a form of breast cancer. She recalls the initial shock of her diagnosis on top of an already difficult year. Over the next several months, Amy underwent cancer treatments including chemotherapy and radiation, as well as a double mastectomy, followed by reconstructive surgery. Living alone was made even harder by the impact of social isolation due to the pandemic, but with the help of her parents, renewed faith in God, and close friends, she never felt alone nor lost her spirit.

Early on, a friend who was diagnosed a year prior, told her to contact the Hearst Cancer Resource Center (HCRC) at French Hospital. The HCRC, which provides services and programs to local cancer patients and their families at no charge, continued to support people like Amy during the pandemic. She was soon connected with the



*“I’m so thankful for all that the HCRC offered me during a very difficult time. I can’t thank donors to the HCRC enough for the support they provide to local cancer patients.”*

*—Amy Spain*

HCRC’s nurse navigator who provided her with support and guidance, answers to her questions, introductions to medical specialists, and access to other resources and programs.

“Family and friends were restricted from going with me to chemo because of the pandemic,” says Amy. “Gloria, my nurse navigator, knew how hard it would be for me to go to my first treatment alone, so she met me at my first session and even surprised me at my second! I wasn’t alone for that step in my journey and that meant so much.” They have remained friends three years later.

Amy also joined the HCRC’s then virtual breast cancer support group. There, she met with others who were experiencing their own setbacks faced by cancer. “I was on a path towards healing and being able to hear what others were going through as well as sharing my own experience with other breast cancer patients made it much more relatable,” she says. “I am very grateful for the connections and lasting friendships I have made through HCRC.”

Today, Amy is a cancer survivor and continues to be grateful for the support she found at the HCRC.

# The Importance of Self-Advocacy

By Julie Neiggemann, RN, MSN, OCN

The concept of self-advocacy has gained a lot of traction in recent years, with greater emphasis on a mutual relationship with the healthcare team, including shared decision-making. This helps patients gain a sense of control and shared power as they navigate the healthcare system. It is a necessary skill to develop in order to promote autonomy and the ability to make one's own informed decisions—choices about one's own life.

Below are some tips on how to develop and practice self-advocacy, so you can move forward with confidence!

- First and foremost—find a provider that you trust! Trust is foundational to a therapeutic physician-patient relationship and provides necessary peace of mind for you to be able to face challenges along the way.
- Be clear about what is most important to you, even if your goals are different than those of your physician—it is the best way for shared decision making to take place.
- Listen to your body: you know it better than anyone else. Trust your instincts and ask for help when you need it.
- Arrive on time or early to appointments so you can maximize the time spent with the practitioner. Write your questions down to make good use of your appointments.
- It is okay to ask if there are options/alternatives to what is being recommended; there may or may not be, but asking can be worth it!
- Don't leave your appointment without knowing the next steps; then commit to do your part and take responsibility for what you need to do in your treatment plan. This will help your healthcare provider trust YOU.
- Keep your healthcare provider informed between appointments if you are experiencing an issue for which you need assistance—there is often something they can recommend that can help you or they can provide you with the reassurance you need.
- Use your nurse navigator, patient navigator, or social worker to help you clarify what you value, questions to ask, or things to bring up with your doctor. They will not make decisions for you, but can help you determine what is most important to you.
- Persistence is fine but remember that your doctor's office is likely working with a large number of patients and it may take a little while for them to get back to you. If your concern is urgent, it may be necessary to seek urgent/emergency care instead.

## Patient Advocacy 101—Advocating for your Own Care

*Speaker panel to include Nurse Navigator, Oncology Social Worker and cancer survivor. Learn how to maximize your cancer care from our local experts.*

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 15, 2024 • 5:30 pm

**WHERE:** Wacker Family Auditorium, Copeland Health Education Pavilion at French Hospital/Third floor

To RSVP, contact: [hcrc@dignityhealth.org](mailto:hcrc@dignityhealth.org) or call 805.542.6234



## The American Dream

*By Kandace Saberhagen, Co-Founder of SabesWings*

**Imagine the comfort of attaining the American Dream, epitomized by the freedom to create a lifestyle that caters to the needs of your family. My dream included earning a college degree, owning a home with a white picket fence, and having a supportive spouse and a wonderfully blended family of six children. It's an achievement that countless individuals strive for and the bedrock of our nation's values.**



**Bret and Kandace Saberhagen**

However, what happens when this dream turns into a nightmare? Despite doing everything right, such as having adequate savings, homeownership, and health insurance, your life changes overnight. Why? Your loving and supportive spouse has been diagnosed with cancer. And not just any cancer, but an aggressively growing tumor that leaves little time for treatment. What can you do? You put your faith in the system that built your American Dream and hope for the best. But what if the system fails you? Despite having medical insurance, it may still not cover the aggressive treatment needed to save your loved one's life.

In such a situation, you do what anyone would do in your shoes: deplete your savings, borrow from your children's college fund, take out a second mortgage on your home, and sell everything you don't need for everyday living. Millions of people have found themselves in those very shoes. You've done everything right, yet it's not enough. Unfortunately, medical debt is a reality that affects everyone, including my husband and me.

Overwhelmed by the diagnosis, I was faced with a difficult choice between continuing with expensive medical treatments or filing for bankruptcy. The gravity of the situation had me questioning my reality. Fortunately, my husband and I were able to reevaluate our priorities and adjust our lifestyle to accommodate my treatment costs. Realizing how fortunate we were to have this opportunity, I couldn't help but wonder how others might handle similar circumstances.

Following in-depth research, I discovered a prevalent issue referred to as Medical Financial Toxicity (MFT). This phenomenon presents a formidable challenge for patients who have utilized their savings, run out of insurance coverage, or do not have insurance, ultimately compelling them to choose between vital medical treatments and their daily expenses. My experience is not uncommon, as many others are also grappling with this dilemma.

As a result of my research, SabesWings was established as a valuable resource for patients grappling with these challenges, providing a crucial outlet for those seeking assistance in keeping their families afloat while fighting cancer. SabesWings extends financial grants to patients who are grappling with both medical and household debts.

My husband and I were committed to ensuring that no one experiences feelings of loneliness and despair without having someone to turn to with resources that could help. Since inception in 2021, we have gratefully helped countless patients overcome financial obstacles as a result of Medical Financial Toxicity.

**If you or a loved one has received a cancer diagnosis and are encountering Medical Financial Toxicity, we encourage you to reach out to us at [info@SabesWings.org](mailto:info@SabesWings.org), or visit our website [www.SabesWings.org](http://www.SabesWings.org) to obtain further information.**

Together we can keep the American Dream alive for cancer patients. Help us lift those in need.

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Share Hope was a Great Success!

**Our October fundraiser, Share Hope, raised over \$40,000 to help provide important services to local cancer patients**

During our annual Share Hope Campaign that runs in October in collaboration with Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2023, the Hearst Cancer Resource Center received many donations from the community helping to maintain the services that are provided to local cancer patients. The level of generosity that was shown this year was tremendous. This generosity continues to enable the Hearst Cancer Resource Center to create new programs and resources that are so vital to SLO County. With the help of the community, we have been able to assist patients with services that include emotional support, medical education, wellness programs, nutritional insight, wigs and head coverings, skin care tips, and many others. For our October fundraiser, Share Hope, we raised over **\$40,000** to continue on the 15-year legacy that the Hearst Cancer Resource Center was built upon. We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who has continued to support our mission and a big shoutout to the following Share Hope 2023 Major Sponsors:

- Café Roma
- Cal Poly Softball & Baseball
- Central Coast Brewing
- Chicago Title Insurance Company
- Christine Williams & Friends
- Fidelity National Title
- Grover Beach Police Officers' Association
- The Human Bean—Central Coast
- Michael Hammons & Friends
- Movement for Life Physical Therapy
- Orkin Central Coast
- Poor Richard's Press
- Sea Pines Golf Course
- Sea Pines Ladies Golf Club
- Shell Gas Stations—Laguna Center & Madonna Road
- SLO Police Officers' Association
- Sunset Honda
- Susan Minker, MD
- Tooth & Nail Winery
- Wine Sneak



*Above: Hospital staff members sport their “No one fights alone” pink shirts*

*Right: Sunset Honda team*

Vital HCRC services include emotional support, medical education, wellness programs, nutritional insight, wigs and head coverings, skin care tips, and much more.





# Coffee for a Cure

## Breast Cancer Giveback Event

Over twenty years ago, a duo of husband and wife teams decided they were going to open a standalone, drive-thru coffee shop that would be part of the community to be good and do good. They needed a name. While great coffee is the foundation, it wasn't the whole story. It was about the people. It was about The Human Bean.



Today, The Human Beans in Atascadero, Morro Bay and Templeton are part of The Human Bean family. We are locally owned and operated and happy to be part of the community, to be good and do good. Coffee is just the beginning for us. On Friday, October 20, we participated in The Human Bean's annual "Coffee for a Cure" breast cancer giveback event and invited customers to "drink pink." All food and

beverage proceeds on this day from our three locations were donated to French Hospital Medical Center's Breast Cancer Prevention Fund. "Coffee for a Cure" was a great success thanks to our customers and staff. We raised **\$5,872.35** for this valuable community resource.

This donation aligns with our commitment to support our local community and make a positive difference. We are proud to partner with French Hospital Medical Center to "BE GOOD AND DO GOOD".

**Hearst Cancer Resource Center salutes the generous spirit of owners Pat and Vikki Mitchell of The Human Bean—Central California, along with their staff and patrons.**



### Staff Spotlight

**Angela Fissell, RD**

Registered Dietitian

*Q: How long have you worked at HCRC?*

I have worked with the HCRC as a Registered Dietitian since it opened in 2008. I was offered the opportunity to be a part of a community of amazing professionals who offer hope and help to those going through a cancer journey.

*Q: Why is HCRC important to you and/or this community?*

The HCRC is important to this community because it can be a place of support and encouragement during a very difficult time for people who are diagnosed with cancer. Helping people during this journey is rewarding and inspiring to me, both professionally and personally. It means the world to me when people are feeling heard and supported!

*Q: What is something personal that you enjoy and would like to share?*

Beyond enjoying time with my family and nature, I have recently taken to baking sourdough bread from scratch using a sourdough starter. I love the process of observation, and the trial and error that is involved with getting that "just right" loaf of crusty sourdough bread. It's my new passion! It's been fun to share this passion with others who want to try it as well which doubles the enjoyment!

# Turn to us for answers

## HEARST CANCER RESOURCE CENTER

1941 Johnson Avenue, Suite 201  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
805.542.6234  
Monday–Friday  
9AM–4:30PM  
[dignityhealth.org/hcrc](http://dignityhealth.org/hcrc)  
Please call for an appointment

**Thomas Spillane, MD**  
*Medical Director*

**Shannon D’Acquisto**  
*Director, Cancer Survivor*  
[HCRC@dignityhealth.org](mailto:HCRC@dignityhealth.org)

**Julie Neiggemann, RN, MSN, OCN**  
*Nurse Navigator*

**Ashley Hahn, MSW, LCSW**  
*Social Worker*

**Eloisa Medina**  
*Patient Navigator*  
805.786.6130—en español

**Angela Fissell, RD**  
*Registered Dietitian*

**Ramie Castilleja**  
*Program Coordinator*

**Lisa Steinbeck**  
*Cancer Registrar*

## IMAGING CENTERS

FHMC San Luis Diagnostic Center  
1100 Monterey Street, #210  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
805.542.9700

FHMC Women’s Health and  
Imaging Center  
1941 Johnson Ave., Suite 104  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
805.597.6700

## SLO ONCOLOGY & HEMATOLOGY HEALTH CENTER

715-B/C Tank Farm Road  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Direct: 805.543.5577

*Care Providers:*  
**Thomas Spillane, MD**  
*Medical Oncology Director of  
Clinical Trials*

**Gorgun Akpek, MD, MHS**  
**Robin DiBiase, NP, OCN**  
**Daniel Lewis, MD**  
**James Malone III, MD**  
**Lin Soe, MD**  
**Tim Soucek, PA**

## SLO INFUSION CENTER

715-B/C Tank Farm Road  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Direct: 805.786.6140  
Nurse Line: 805.786.6144

**Susan Diaz, RN, OCN**  
*Director*

## DIGNITY CANCER CARE CENTRAL COAST

Mission Hope Cancer Center  
1325 East Church Street, Suite 102  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
805.219.HOPE (4673)

850 Fair Oaks Avenue  
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420  
805.474.5300

**Katherine Guthrie**  
*Senior Regional Director,  
Cancer Services*

**Kathleen Sullivan, PhD, RN**  
*Vice President, Post Acute Care and  
Health Services Operations*

## ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Dignity Health Home Health  
& Hospice  
800.549.9609

Palliative Care  
805.739.3950

## COASTAL CANCER PARTNERS

The Hearst Cancer Resource Center has partnered with these organizations to bring programs and activities to the community:

**17 Strong**  
[seventeenstrong.org](http://seventeenstrong.org)

**American Cancer Society**  
[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

**Camp Kesem Cal Poly**  
[campkesem.org](http://campkesem.org)

**Cancer Connections**  
[cancerconnectionslo.org](http://cancerconnectionslo.org)

**Cancer Support Community**  
[cscslo.org](http://cscslo.org)

**Cancer Well-Fit Program**  
[cancerwell-fit.com](http://cancerwell-fit.com)

**Central Coast Dragon Boat Association—Central Coast SurviveOars**  
[ccdba.org](http://ccdba.org)

**DreamMakers SLO**  
[dreammakersslo.com](http://dreammakersslo.com)

**Hats for Hope**  
[hatsforhope.com](http://hatsforhope.com)

**Jack’s Helping Hand**  
[jackshelpinghand.org](http://jackshelpinghand.org)

**Leukemia and Lymphoma Society**  
[lls.org](http://lls.org)

**SabesWings**  
[SabesWings.org](http://SabesWings.org)

**Surfing for Hope**  
[surfingforhope.org](http://surfingforhope.org)

**Teddy Bear Foundation**  
[teddybearcancerfoundation.org](http://teddybearcancerfoundation.org)

## Hearst Cancer Resource Center

Mailing address:  
1911 Johnson Avenue,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Street address:  
1941 Johnson Avenue, Suite 201,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

## HCRC Advisory Committee

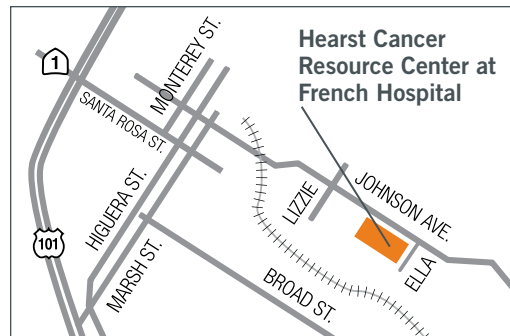
*French Hospital Medical Center*

**Patrick Caster**—PRESIDENT AND CEO  
**Julia Fogelson, MSN, RN**—COO, CNE  
**Nancy Bussani**—INTERIM  
VP PHILANTHROPY  
**Thomas Vendegna, MD**—CMO  
**Debbie Wettlaufer**—CFO

### *Committee Members*

**Sandy Dunn**—CHAIR  
**Gayle Cekada, MD**  
**Edwin Hayashi, MD**  
**Jack Hearst**  
**Stephen Hearst**  
**Stephen Hilty, MD**  
**Robert Johnson, MD**  
**Noreen Martin**  
**Susan Minker, MD**  
**Don Oberhelman**  
**Colleen Russell, DPT**  
**Thomas Spillane, MD**  
**Jackie Starr**  
**Christine Williams**

## Hearst Cancer Resource Center



### Hearst Cancer Resource Center

*Commission on Cancer Community Cancer Program*

1911 Johnson Avenue  
San Luis Obispo, CA, 93401  
805.542.6234



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