

# 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.*

## Our Caregiving Journey



**By Deborah and Scott Smith-Cooke**

We want to offer our experiences as caregivers and how that changed through our three bouts of cancer—first Scott, then Deborah and, lastly, Scott again.

With the first diagnosis, we were new to caregiving and to cancer and learning how to support each other. Starting a dialogue was often difficult but brought a better understanding of each other's emotions—allowing needs to be spoken and met!

Deborah's diagnosis brought a role reversal; everything was familiar, only different. Scott was a caregiver with the perspective of a patient, and she learned the patient role while gaining a better understanding of what is needed from a caregiver (leading to thoughts of "if I only knew then what I know now").

The third diagnosis was met with a wider perspective on the needs of both caregiver and patient, as we each had both experiences.

### Lessons that we learned:

First and foremost, keep the lines of communication open and talk about the scary stuff; share the fears. Don't be afraid to ask for what you need. Hold each other as you allow the tears. Recognize and acknowledge the strengths each of you bring to the journey. Give yourselves breaks to recharge that caregiving energy! Take care of the caregiver, so they can continue to be a caregiver. Remember that every caregiving experience is unique, be flexible.

We are all caregivers in some way throughout our lives, although we may not recognize it. We all learn from each other; be open to sharing your journey with someone starting theirs. Being a caregiver can be harder than being a cancer patient.

Please consider attending a Caregiver Support Group meeting through the Hearst Cancer Resource Center.



## 2021 Updates

2021 What a year... We saw so many challenges as a community and as a resource center, but we are finding our way through the tunnel. I would first like to recognize the retiring of our beloved past Director and Nurse Navigator—the work that Beverly and Gloria did to foster the gifts of this center and share them with this community is immeasurable. They laid the foundation for amazing things to blossom, and blossom they have!

In the winter Julie Neiggemann, RN, MSN, joined our staff as the new Nurse Navigator, and she has continued the great nursing support tradition offered by our team. In the spring, together with the French Hospital Medical Center Foundation and amazing donors, we were able to add the position of Social Worker to our services and Lauren Jermstad, LCSW joined our team in August. We are currently under construction in our suite, for a new Social Work office as well.

Throughout the year, we have continued and expanded many of our existing programs, educations, mammograms for the underserved, support groups and wellness classes on the digital platform. We have worked hard to find the silver lining and embrace

the new normal that cancer creates and COVID has magnified. Here a few highlights:

- **More than 85 wigs given to cancer patients**
- **More than 4,000 patients served**
- **16 monthly wellness classes**
- **10 educational lectures presented**
- **10 monthly support groups**
- **More than 900 rides given**
- **More than \$60,000 worth of gas cards and financial assistance given to Angel of Hope recipients**

So many volunteers and donors support our programs from near and far—we could not do this without you! As a cancer survivor myself, a past member and volunteer facilitator of support groups, I have been witness to many lives supported by the great work that this center offers. Together, with our whole staff, we are proud and honored to be part of your cancer journey and hope that our work can make your life a little easier.

Happy Holidays,  
*Shannon D'Acquisto and the team at  
Hearst Cancer Resource Center*



# Protecting Our Mental Health During the Holidays



*By Lauren Jermstad, LCSW*

It's fall—what a sweet time of year! As the leaves begin to change colors, this means the holidays are near! The holidays are such an exciting time, right? Beautiful decorations take over the stores and our homes, baked goods and scrumptious dinners await us, there are gatherings with friends and family and generous gifts, and, of course, a heart full of joy and gratitude. These things are all wonderful, they really are; but sometimes they don't feel that way.

The holidays can bring about financial and social pressure and high expectations from friends and family. Pressure and expectation can leave us feeling overwhelmed, anxious and depressed. The busyness of it all can disrupt healthy habits and routines leaving us feeling depleted. Perhaps the holidays have always been something you look forward to, but this year is different. The holidays can be a reminder of loss—the loss of your health or the loss of a dearly loved friend or family member. The holiday blues are a real thing.

According to a recent study from the National Alliance for Mental Health, 64% of people with a mental illness report that holidays make their conditions worse.

The holiday blues are a temporary feeling; it can be normal to feel anxious, depressed or stressed with the holidays nearing. Acknowledging these feelings is so important and seeking help from a mental health professional is a display of strength. Processing these feelings and understanding how the holidays affect you is valuable because it can help you prioritize your mental health during the holidays and celebrate in alignment to your needs. Having therapeutic tools to help you navigate the holidays can help you feel some joy and gratitude during the holiday season again.

Join me on December 7, 2021, to talk more about this important topic and to gain tools to help us feel less stressed and overwhelmed during the holiday season.

## Holiday Wellness and Self Care

**WHEN:** December 7, 12 p.m. To receive the zoom link  
**WHERE:** Zoom please email:  
**PRESENTED BY:** [hcrc@dignityhealth.org](mailto:hcrc@dignityhealth.org) or  
Lauren Jermstad, LCSW call 805.542.6234





## The Courage of Caregivers

I don't think anyone says when they are a child, "I want to be a caregiver when I grow up." They may consider other "helping" professions, but not a caregiver for a family member or friend who no longer is able to care for themselves. Many times, caregiving is just thrust on the most available family member, like a spouse, a parent, a sibling, or adult child who lives nearby. Sometimes it is a close friend who needs help and has no relatives who can help.

To become a caregiver takes courage. Courage to help someone who would rather be independent. Courage to give a piece of yourself to someone else so they can thrive in a home setting. Courage to recognize that you are just human, with good days and bad. Courage to offer someone your all while watching them steadily decline. Courage to accept that your life is different now—full of the rewards of giving and receiving, yet different.

The gifts of caregiving may not be tangible, but they are there. They come in the day-to-day stories. They come in times of sadness, like watching someone close going through stages of dementia, Parkinson's, a stroke and so on. Sometimes it is an unexpected smile. Other times it is a thank you. Most of the time, it is a knowing in your heart that the joy one receives comes from helping someone thrive. Caregiving is challenging, but it is also rewarding. It is finding the silver lining in all situations and knowing that you have made a difference.

Unfortunately, caregivers are sometimes taken for granted by other family members; not intentionally, but because family members not involved tend not to know all of the details, the time it takes, the challenges, the sacrifices that a caregiver makes.

Caregivers often neglect self-care in the day-to-day activities. They can forget to create space for themselves spiritually, emotionally, and mentally, as well as physically. Self-care is an important component of staying healthy. It enables the caregiver to stay in touch with who they are and recognize what is needed to maintain their own health.

Caregivers have good days and bad days and need encouragement once in a while. Take time to show appreciation for the caregivers in your life. They are making a difference.

*Please join us for our upcoming education:*

### **Courage for the Caregiver**

**WHEN:** Tuesday, November 9, 5:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Zoom

**PRESENTED BY:** Flora Washburn, BCC

To receive the Zoom link please email:

***hcrc@dignityhealth.org*** or call ***805.542.6234***

# Share Hope and Gratitude by Supporting the Hearst Cancer Resource Center

At this time of year, we often reflect on what we are grateful for in our lives—people, places, and experiences that have impacted us in some way. Many people choose to express their gratitude by making a gift to support organizations with causes near to their heart. This year, we hope that you will consider making a gift to the Hearst Cancer Resource Center (HCRC).

Thanks to support from people like you, this unique center is able to provide all programs and services at no charge to cancer patients and their families, ensuring that all local cancer patients have access to HCRC's vital resources.

You can help make sure that free services are always available to those who need them by donating to the HCRC today. 100 percent of every gift goes directly to support the HCRC.

To make a gift, visit [SupportFrenchHospital.org/HCRC](https://SupportFrenchHospital.org/HCRC), call the French Hospital Medical Center Foundation at **805.542.6496** or mail your gift to the Foundation at **1911 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401**.



## Advisory Member Spotlight

*Susan Minker, in her own words:*

A retired diagnostic radiologist, I've been involved with the HCRC almost since its inception, as a donor and as a member of the Advisory Committee. I'm one-third of the

sub-committee that gives out the grants for the Angel of Hope. My husband died of lung cancer (non-smoker!) 13 years ago, and my sister, who lives in London, is now battling metastatic colon cancer. In addition to my work with the HCRC, I'm on the board of SLO REP. I take my two standard poodles, Mattie (15) and Benny (2), to the off-leash beach as often as possible.

## Free services include:

- Nurse navigator to guide, advocate and support patients through their journey
- Support Groups
  - All Blood Support Group
  - Breast Cancer Support Group
  - Caregiver Support Group
  - Living With Cancer Support Group
  - Prostate Cancer Support Group
  - Spanish Support Group, en Español
  - Young Survivor Support Group
- Social services, programs, one-on-one, family, and financial resource support
- Nutritional counseling with our Registered Dietitian
- Lay Patient Navigator
- Wellness tools to aid in holistic well-being and relaxation
  - Energy Balancing
  - Guided Meditation
  - Intuitive Collage
  - Lymphedema Evaluation
- Appearance center with hats and wigs
- Exercise and strengthening classes
  - Pilates
  - Tai Chi Chih
  - Qigong
  - Yoga
- Educational presentations from local and national experts
- Transportation Support

## 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*

**Alan Iftiniuk**—PRESIDENT AND CEO

**Julia Fogelson, MSN, RN**—COO, CNE

**Debby Nicklas**—VP PHILANTHROPY

**Thomas Vendegna, MD**—CMO

### *Board Members*

**Sandy Dunn**

**Stephen Hearst**

**Stephen Hilty, MD**

**Stephen Holtzman, MD**

**Noreen Martin**

**Susan Minker, MD**

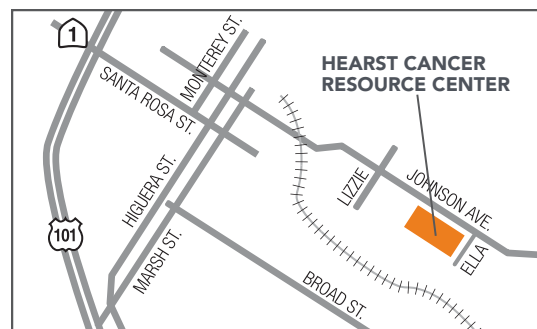
**Don Oberhelman**

**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



SCAN ME