

Experience a Community of Hope: Meet NVAR's Valued Neighbor

The Best Survivorship Program in the Country

It is no secret that Northern Virginia is a wonderful place to live. While practical advantages such as a healthy economy and job market take center stage, the importance of being surrounded by good neighbors cannot be ignored. There is a powerful synergy between NVAR and its neighbor, the non-profit organization, The Dewberry Life with Cancer Family Center.

Often called Life with Cancer, the group has a new headquarters facility next door to ours. The building bears a double moniker. It is both the "Dewberry Life with Cancer Family Center," in honor of Dewberry's contribution of land for the facility, and it is affectionately known as "Carolyn's House" in honor of major funder and cancer survivor Carolyn Peterson.

"Life With Cancer is not only our neighbor, but a major contributor to the quality of life for people in Northern Virginia," notes NVAR Chief Executive Officer Christine Todd. "Gordon Hay and his staff strive to make a difference in people's fight against cancer using every means possible. Since Realtors® are often the first point of contact for newcomers, our members serve as ambassadors for many vital community services, and our relationship with Life With Cancer serves as another conduit for the important resources they offer."

Life with Cancer: Helping People Live With It

Life with Cancer is a charitable organization whose mission is "to enhance the quality of life of those affected by cancer by providing education, information and support." It offers services to cancer patients and their families and friends for free.

Information, education and support are provided from the moment a patient is diagnosed to treatment and afterward. Life with Cancer runs more than 40 different programs each month at locations in the City of Alexandria, and Fairfax and Loudoun counties. The organization is funded by donations from the community and corporations.

Gordon Hay, the founding director, says that Life with Cancer has used multiple approaches to reach out to its clients. In addition to traditional counseling and support groups, the organization has harnessed 21st Century technology. "We support families in the community through Internet services that include our website (lifewithcancer.org), webinars, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Inspire, which is a social networking site for health and wellness," says Hay. "We are more and more online because we can reach more people that way. We're no longer limited by distance, though our primary audience is in Northern Virginia."

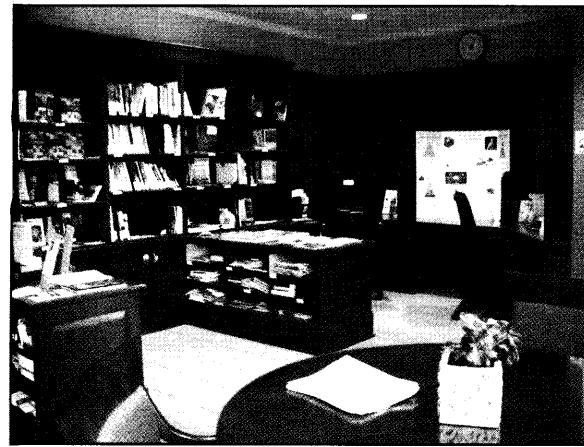
Since the organization was founded 23 years ago, a new paradigm has emerged for cancer treatment. Though the CDC still considers a cancer survivor as someone who has successfully completed treatment,

a consensus is emerging that survivorship begins from the moment of diagnosis. Hay says, "Survivorship: That's us!" He explains that the emphasis on survivorship empowers people who are touched by cancer. Survivors are active people who are out in the world living their lives with a difference — they are overcoming a major life challenge. "Our mission," Hay continues, "is to help people live with cancer."

Joanne Royaltey, Life with Cancer's Development Director, says the services that Life with Cancer offers help fill a gap in cancer care. While a great deal of information is available on prevention and medical treatment, there has been a lag in developing information on how to live with cancer. Royaltey, who is the parent of a daughter who died after a prolonged battle with cancer, says, "Life with Cancer helps support you through this journey."

The 16,000-square-foot Life With Cancer headquarters is constructed to look and feel like a home-away-from-home for cancer patients and their families. The reception area features a large stone fireplace, and a deep, comfy couch.

A resource library includes a cancer reading room and computers. There are also meeting rooms and a well-appointed kitchen, which is used for nutritional classes and cooking demos. The main floor has a children's center where staff can address the special counseling needs young children have in dealing with cancer. The facility's newest addition is an appearance center, which features a beauty parlor and store where clients can choose from wigs, prostheses and other supplies and resources to help normalize their appearance during treatment and recovery.



The Life with Cancer resource library is open to anyone for research or as a quiet place to read and unwind. Members of the public may schedule a tour to explore all that the facility offers, including a tranquil outdoor garden.



The Dewberry Life with Cancer Family Center, located next door to the NVAR Fairfax headquarters at 8411 Pennell Street, offers a variety of services to cancer patients, their families and the community. These include education, support, community outreach and cancer patient advocacy.



Gordon Hay, Life With Cancer's founding director, says that the organization helps its clients focus on the *here and now*, on achieving the best possible quality of life.

There are several ways to get help. Clients can simply walk into the Life With Cancer family center and ask to speak to a counselor or they can telephone or attend support groups at any of the five Inova Hospitals.

Life with Cancer has a \$2 million budget with 24 staff members. As of November 2010, staff had provided more than 35,000 service hours to between 3,500-4,000 people. To maintain its free services, Life with Cancer depends on individual gifts. It is also supported by foundation grants and corporate contributions. "Individual gifts," Hay says, "are the reason why we're the best survivorship program in the country."

NVAR and Life with Cancer: An Evolving Relationship

NVAR and Life with Cancer's first group event was a potluck lunch in October of last year for people to share what they did, and the natural synergy between the two organizations became apparent. "Realtors® are powerful connectors and helpers," says Royaltey. "They link newcomers to community resources by providing them with information and contacts. Realtors® also have a stake in seeing that their community is known as a good place to live."

Several members of NVAR's staff volunteered to take part in a fashion

show to benefit Life with Cancer on October 21, 2010. The event was part of Saks Fifth Avenue Stores' month-long "Key to the Cure" campaign that supports breast cancer research. Ann Gutkin, NVAR Communications and Media Relations Manager, was one of the models.

"Volunteering in the fashion show," Gutkin says, "was one small way I could contribute to the important work of the organization. I felt privileged to share the stage with the other volunteer models, many of whom were cancer survivors. My family, like so many others, has been affected by cancer, and it is a comfort to know that this support system exists in our community."

Future Collaborations

Joanne Royaltey sensed a real spirit of community at the shared events. She anticipates more conversations on how the two groups can help each other and the community.

Hay sees NVAR as an important channel for outreach, "We're always looking for help in making people aware of our services. Realtors® are especially good for this because they meet with a wide array of people. Additionally, Realtors® are seen as people you go to for information about a community." *

EDITOR'S NOTE: Liz Milner is a freelance writer who lives in Annandale, Virginia.

Why is Life With Cancer called CAROLYN'S HOUSE?

Life with Cancer's Family Center wouldn't exist without the help of the Peterson family. Milton Peterson is the owner of Peterson Construction. In partnership with Til Hazel, he transformed the face of Northern Virginia through the development of Tysons Corner and went on to become the developer of the National Harbor and Burke Center.

His wife, Carolyn Peterson, is a cancer survivor and major donor since the program opened its doors in September 1988. Carolyn Peterson was the first Board president and served in that position for 10 years. Instrumental in convincing Inova Health System to build the facility, she and her family dedicated themselves to raising the money to build Life With Cancer. In recognition of the contributions of Carolyn and her family, the Board of Directors recently voted unanimously to name the center "Carolyn's House."