



**GOSHEN  
CENTER FOR CANCER CARE**

200 High Park Avenue, Goshen, Indiana 46526

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# The Link for Hope

A newsletter of the Goshen Cancer Survivor Network July 2009

photo by Tony McNair



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## Summertime fitness and nutrition

Fitness and nutrition are VITAL components of every cancer survivor's wellness journey. POP & WOW (Play Off the Pounds - Women on Weights) is one of several fitness classes suitable for cancer survivors at The Retreat in Goshen. Play Off the Pounds - Women on Weights was started by cancer survivor Marilyn Graber who wanted to optimize her health after treatment.

Open to the community, an array of fitness and nutrition classes are available at The Retreat including Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi and Gentle-Cardio. During the months of July and August you may purchase ten weeks of unlimited fitness classes for \$40. Call Norma Monik, fitness and nutrition coordinator at 574-535-2855 for more information.

Jump start healthy eating by attending 'Noontime Nosh' each Thursday from noon to 12:30 p.m. Held at the Goshen Center for Cancer Care's second floor conference room, Noontime Nosh is free and open to any cancer patient. Registered dietitians Becky Overholt and Tiffany Swartzentruber will demonstrate how to prepare healthy food dishes and also share samples with the audience. Call 866-775-HOPE for information. ■



**POP & WOW: cancer survivor Joan Kincaid, community participants Darla Hostetler, Barbara Stahly and Colleen Wertz.**

# Life is good...

by Peggy Davis,  
lung cancer survivor



*Peggy Davis and Donna Hopkins with friends: Echo, Josie and Shalie.*

“Two packs a day for the last 30 years.” Looking back, that was my answer to the doctor who asked me over seven years ago “Do you smoke?” Since both my parents had died of heart problems, I was more concerned about my heart than my lungs.

Of course, that changed near Valentine’s Day 2002 when the Goshen Hospital emergency room doctor said I had a cancerous tumor that was pressing on my superior vena cava. That must have been the reason why my skin was grey in color! After hearing the ‘c’ word, I recall telling my friend Donna that I wanted to just “go home.” The doctor told me if I left the hospital I would be dead before evening.

And so began my journey into the world of cancer survivorship. It was late in the day but Dr. Cohen at the Goshen Center for Cancer Care saw me immediately and began my treatment for malignant neo bronchial lung cancer at the age of 44. The doctors and nurses at the cancer center were always there to help along the way. Donna would call the cancer center whenever we had a question about my treatment and if they didn’t know the answer right then, they told her where to find it or called us back with the answer.

For over twelve years now I have been a veterinary receptionist at the White

Veterinary Hospital in Goshen. During my treatment, I would open the office every morning and then head for the cancer center for radiation before going back to work. I did that every day until my three weeks of radiation was completed so I could start chemotherapy. After two rounds of chemotherapy I was so sick that we did not proceed with another round. Dr. Bruetman ordered an MRI and it showed that the cancer was gone. I have now been in remission from small cell lung cancer for over seven years!

It’s been a long road to where I am today, but one that I can honestly say has brought me to a good place in my life. My health has been restored by Dr. Bruetman (I love that man) and all the other great people at Goshen Center for Cancer Care. I have learned to not take life for granted but to live every day for all it is worth. I see now that there were many things in life that I was missing. I pray every day that the cancer does not come back and that the day comes when cancer does not exist.

I now serve as a member of the coordinating committee for the new Goshen Cancer Survivor Network and I am hopeful that the things we do will wake people up. I have always used humor to deal with problems, but humor did not work on cancer. It took the amazing doctors at Goshen to do that. I know that I went from being ‘poor pitiful me’ to ‘I have it pretty darn good’ because of the care I received. I still say that life is a circus, always something new coming our way, but life is great today and I intend to do everything I can to keep it that way. I no longer smoke, I eat a lot less meat than I used to, load up on my daily veggies and see Dr. Bruetman for my follow up appointments regularly. Life is good. ■

# Living With Cancer

## EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Tuesdays, July 28 through Sept. 29, 4:30-6:00 p.m.

CCC Upper Level Conference Room

(elevator to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and proceed straight ahead and towards the right).

Free of charge - families and friends welcome to attend

This 10 week series focuses on providing education and support for cancer patients, families, and friends in understanding and dealing with cancer. Groups are facilitated by Rita Gingrich, LCSW, PNI Counselor, and/or Pat Shoemaker, BSW, PNI Counselor. Please join us!

### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

July 28 – Session 1

**Thoughts, Emotions, and Hope:** Examine the mind-body connection and its role in cancer wellness. Experience hope through mutually shared stories and experiences. (Rita Gingrich, LCSW, PNI Counselor)

Aug. 4 – Session 2

**Talking with Doctors:** Talk with a physician about a variety of topics including the patient/doctor relationship and communication. Get your questions about cancer answered by an oncologist. (James Wheeler, MD)

Aug. 11 – Session 3

**Creative Expression:** Each one of us has a unique approach to creative expression. Tap into your own creativity and discover how it can help you relax, renew, and rejuvenate. (Pat Shoemaker, BSW, PNI Counselor)

Aug. 18 – Session 4

**Reflections on Spirituality:** Explore the interconnectedness between spirituality and healing, including the psychological and spiritual benefits of prayer. We will also review and learn meditation and prayer practices that aim to bring peace in the midst of challenging times. (Shawn Gerber, M. Div, BCC, GHS Chaplain)

Aug. 25 – Session 5

**Guided Imagery:** Learn about a technique that engages the whole person – mind, body, and spirit – and helps guide the imagination toward a relaxed and focused state. (Rita Gingrich, LCSW, PNI Counselor)

Sept. 1 – Session 6

**Benefits of Exercise:** A review of the benefits of exercise, particularly for those undergoing cancer treatments. We will look at the obstacles cancer treatment puts in the way of exercise and tips for overcoming these obstacles. (Carol Parmelee, OTR)

Sept. 8 – Session 7

**Managing your Pain:** Not all of those with cancer will have pain. However, one of the most feared symptoms of the cancer diagnosis is pain that is out-of-control. Learn about various successful approaches to making the pain more manageable and making you more comfortable. (Leah Miller, NP, Pain Management)

Sept. 15 – Session 8


**Vitamins/Supplements Q & A:** An opportunity to learn which supplements are important in cancer treatment and prevention. (Heather Paulson, ND)

Sept. 22 – Session 9

**Nutrition Notes:** Fighting cancer with your knife and fork. Address your nutrition questions and get new ideas that work. (Becky Overholt, RD)

Sept. 29 – Session 10

**Walking the Labyrinth:** Find a path to inner peace by walking the labyrinth, a tool for relaxation and healing. (Rita Gingrich, LCSW, PNI Counselor).



# Concurrent use of tamoxifen and antidepressants.

## Is it safe? What are the facts?

Carol A. Westbrook, MD PhD

Keith Margraf, Pharm D

Many women diagnosed with breast cancer are taking tamoxifen (Novaldex®) as part of their treatment. Tamoxifen works in the breast by exhibiting an anti-estrogen action that prevents the development and growth of estrogen sensitive breast cancer cells. Recent studies have suggested that some medications may interact with tamoxifen, leading to lower levels of the cancer drug. These medications deactivate an enzyme in the body necessary for the proper function of tamoxifen and are referred to as “CYP2D inhibitors.” Included in the list of medications that can affect this enzyme are many commonly prescribed antidepressants. Examples include bupropion

(Wellbutrin®), citalopram (Celexa®), duloxetine (Cymbalta®), escitalopram (Lexapro®), fluoxetine (Prozac®), fluvoxamine (Luvox®), paroxetine (Paxil®), sertraline (Zoloft®), and venlafaxine (Effexor®). With so many medications potentially nullifying the activity of tamoxifen therapy, an obvious concern has arisen among breast cancer survivors that are also taking antidepressant medications.

A contrary study presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) meeting this past May also looked at this very important question. Dr. Vincent Dezentje and his colleagues from Utrecht University in Netherlands, studied 1,990 breast cancer patients who had been prescribed tamoxifen as part of their treatment. Of these women, 10.8% were taking a CYP2D inhibitor during their treatment. Reassuringly, this study did not show an association between use of CYP2D6 inhibitors and breast cancer recurrence. What the study did find, however, is that women who failed to take their tamoxifen regularly had a much higher risk of cancer recurrence.

In summary, it may not be necessary for women on tamoxifen therapy to discontinue their antidepressant. It is prudent to be cautious when starting antidepressant therapy or when the current therapy requires changing to ask your doctor to choose a medication that will have the least potential to affect the tamoxifen. Among the medications listed above, citalopram (Celexa®), escitalopram (Lexapro®), and venlafaxine (Effexor®) are considered weak inhibitors and their impact on tamoxifen is negligible. Also, desvenlafaxine (Pristiq®) is a relatively new antidepressant on the market and has demonstrated little or no activity as a CYP2D inhibitor. Women who are prescribed tamoxifen are advised to talk to their doctor before stopping any medication or taking it upon themselves to alter any dosages. ■



## Coordinator's Corner

Hello survivors! Summer has arrived and the Goshen Cancer Survivor Network continues to grow with almost 450 members! I would like to tell you about the most recent addition to the network, a program called 'Survivor Buddies.' Buddies are former patients of the Goshen Center for Cancer Care who have offered to provide support and encouragement to new patients.

The next Survivor Buddy orientation is August 7 at 11:00 a.m. If you are interested in becoming a Buddy, I hope you will plan to attend this orientation. Buddies must be a former patient of Goshen Center for Cancer Care and be willing to share some of their time, either by phone or in person, with a new patient. Please call or email to let me know your interest in attending this orientation. I hope you can help as there are new patients who need your encouragement.

Also, I am pleased to tell you that the Goshen survivorship program has been invited to participate in the final 'Achieving Excellence in Care for Cancer Survivors' conference in California this month. This conference is part of the National Cancer Institute funded national project to prepare teams from leading cancer centers to enhance the quality of care for their cancer survivors. Medical oncology nurse Jill Miller will also be attending the conference with me. We look forward to bringing you the best in cancer survivorship, until then, live strong! – Sandy

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