

SURVIVOR

TIMES

A newsletter for cancer survivors, by cancer survivors.
Sponsored by The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program.

Survive, Thrive & Hope

by Dr. Ermelinda Sgro

Of these three words, the last one is at the base of everything. It is the strength that moves the world and makes me and you survive and thrive. I am sitting on my porch and I contemplate the surrounding foliage.

Life must sing as June progresses from deep green to deeper green, from timid colors to bold ones, from delicacy to robustness. There is a hint of rain in the air; nature hesitates and this uncertainty is part of its charm.

It wrecks all hopes by a dash of warm rain and brings them back by a smile of sunset.

It is beautiful and I know that beauty must not be obvious and does not need to be consistent. Consistency might mean monotony. I feel suspense and this expectancy will be satisfied by surprises, delays, or gratifications.

By the brevity of days, the importance of the hours is increased and especially for us survivors, a new day is a new writing. Each night erases part of what was written and this becomes experience upon which hope writes again.

What remains out of the day's writing, good or painful, is part of the life which each day helps to construct. Hope springs up fresh with each new dawn and writes its newer promises.

Life cannot be static. Its happiest moments are only preludes to hours to come, which in turn, are herald of days. Life is not what constantly is, but what constantly hopes to be.

A small blade of grass, that can be flattened and destroyed under the light foot of a child, has the strength of a piece of steel in order to be able to come up through the hard pavement of this porch where I am standing.

I am watching the strength of survivorship in progress. No matter how hard the conditions are, the grass will come through, will thrive, and in her seeds will be the hope for a tomorrow of new plants, new life. I look at this thin blade of grass and I tell myself: If a blade of grass can make it, so can I. 🍂

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What Not to Say;

What to Say by Louise Flannery

A friend sent me an article from *The New York Times*. I found it interesting and it may be helpful for our certainly well-intentioned families and friends to know **what not to say to a person diagnosed with cancer and what to say.**

What Not to Say:

- **What can I do to help?** Just do something; the more mundane the better: clean out the fridge; replace light bulbs, un-pot dried out plants.
- **My thoughts and prayers are with you.** Some people think about you which is comforting but for the majority of people, this is just a hackneyed platitude. (*This is one I've been guilty of.*)
- **Did you try the miracle tonic, chinese herbs or the grapefruit shower I recommended?** Don't give advice unless asked.
- **Everything will be OK.** The survivor is thinking "That's not what the doctor said." Resist playing Nostradamus.
- **How are we today?** Survivors don't want to be treated like children. Just because someone is dealing with a physical problem doesn't diminish their mental capacity.
- **You look great.** Nice try, but people can see right through this old chestnut.

Here's What to Say:

- **Don't write me back.** Let survivor know you don't expect a thank you note for the chicken soup or kindness performed. Appoint a "Minister of Information" to keep everyone informed of news, updates, etc.
- **I should be going now.** You'll never go wrong by uttering these five words while visiting someone recovering from surgery or other cancer treatment. Twenty minutes are recommended or even less if the person is tired or in pain. You could tidy up the room and take out the trash when you leave.
- **Would you like some gossip?** A slight change of topic goes a long way. Even someone recovering from surgery has an opinion about the playoffs, the front page headlines or the latest scandal.
- **I love you.** When all else fails, simple direct emotion is the most powerful gift you can give someone. It just needs to be real: "I'm sorry you have to go through this." "I hate to see you suffer." Remind survivor they have a "No" clause whenever needed. 🍃

Letter from the Editor:

Greetings and Salutations,

Welcome to the fall 2011 edition of the *Survivor Times* - a newsletter for cancer survivors, by cancer survivors

As we ease into the fall season I am reminded that Thanksgiving is just around the corner. I would personally like to give thanks to all those involved in making this newsletter happen...Your voice has made a positive difference to other cancer survivors and their families.

While this newsletter is a very grassroots approach to supporting a very special community of people, the anecdotes and personal stories, by cancer survivors, for cancer survivors is incredibly inspirational. It promotes a heightened sense of purpose, self worth and wisdom, by sharing the lessons learned with others struggling through a similar journey. There is a definite art to survivorship, and it is my intent to create, connect and support cancer survivors through this very special publication.

The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program is part of the many clinical and educational programs and services offered through Cooper Cancer Institute. This program is committed to providing cancer survivors with access to an array of diverse complementary medicine experiences. Our programs are designed to help them discover ways to cope with the stress and anxiety of their diagnosis, and to alleviate some of the side effects of their treatment by focusing on healing the body, mind and spirit. My goal through this program is to bring together, empower and inspire survivors and to encourage them to incorporate complementary medicine into their lives. The inception of this newsletter is the outcome of one such special program offered throughout the year.

If you have any questions or would like to join the *Survivor Times* team or submit an article, please contact me at mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu

Namaste!



Bonnie Mehr
Manager, The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program

A wise person once said, "Words are the voice of the heart"...
I would like to encourage all cancer survivors to use your voice... just start.

Be a Monthly Sponsor of the Tea Cart

Why? The Tea Cart should be called the "Heart Cart"

Every delicious snack given to our patients while they are receiving their chemo is given from the heart. Our patients are always pleasantly surprised when sitting in the chemo unit for hours and perhaps feeling a little down, when a beautiful flowered cart filled with free juices, a sumptuous variety of baked goods, healthy cheese sticks, yogurt, fresh fruit, candy, pretzels, chocolates, program updates, the *Survivor Times*, and many more surprises, comes along and serves them a little spot of sunshine. It's an inspirational initiative through the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program that serves as a symbol and a testament of the spirit that defines Cooper Cancer Institute as unique and focused on our patients and their families.

For more information or to become a sponsor, please contact Bonnie Mehr, Manager, The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program at **856.325.6646** or mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu. 🍃



Signature Class SERIES

A FREE series of classes for cancer patients and their caregivers.

RESTORATIVE YOGA

Restorative Yoga is especially beneficial for people with flexibility limitations due to a variety of degenerative conditions, as well as those recovering from surgery.

DATES: Sept. 6 & 27; Oct. 4 & 25; Nov. 1 & 22; Dec. 6

TIME: 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

QI GONG

Qi Gong is a modality several centuries old using movement and breath as a way to increase, harness and move the Vital Energy that is within and around us. It can increase focus, improve balance and flexibility, increase circulation, and relax you.

DATES: Sept. 13, Oct. 11, Nov. 8 & 29, Dec. 13

TIME: 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

MEDITATION FOR RELAXATION

Join practitioner Jo Anna Carey and you will be led on a journey of self-discovery through the deeply relaxing practice of meditation for the purpose of nurturing and supporting yourself through life's stresses and joys. Enjoy experiencing a variety of meditation techniques and breathing exercises.

DATE: Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15

TIME: 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

Pre-registration is required for all workshops.
Please call: **1.800.8.COOPER** (1.800.826.6737).
You can also register for these classes online at
events.cooperhealth.org

Please note that workshops are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather.



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Joan S. Davis, Vice Chairman
John P. Sheridan, Jr., President and CEO

LIVE & LEARN

A New Perspective for the Cancer Patient

TIME: 11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

- **Thursday, September 15, 2011:**
Writers Workshop: Do you have something to say? A story to tell?

We all have a voice...Come and explore simple writing techniques and writing options for expressing yourself and inspiring others through your cancer journey. Be a part of a special edition of the Survivor Times.

PRESENTED BY: *Bonnie Mehr, BA, MT, Manager, The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program, Cooper Cancer Institute*

- **Thursday, October 20, 2011:**
The Pleasure of Food: Recipe Sharing and Dish Sampling

Food evokes a variety of emotions in us all... from comfort to celebration. We all have a special recipe for a dish that brings us pleasure. Bring in your recipe, and make and bring in the dish for your fellow survivors to sample. Be prepared to tell the group what personal, cultural or comforting meaning this recipe has for you!

PRESENTED BY: *Bonnie Mehr, BA, MT, Manager, The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program, Cooper Cancer Institute; Alicia Michaux, MS, RD, Oncology Dietitian, Cooper Cancer Institute*

- **Thursday, November 17, 2011:**
Vitamins & Cancer: Ask the Doctor



Please join us for a lecture and informal discussion about the role vitamins play during both cancer treatment and survivorship.

PRESENTED BY: *Lesley Ann Hughes, MD, Department of Radiation Oncology, Cooper Cancer Institute*

- **Thursday, December 15, 2011:**
Annual Dr Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program Holiday Party

For cancer survivors only. Please feel free to bring a dessert for all to share. Limited space available, so please register.

2011 Art of Survivorship Series



Location: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Building, Voorhees, NJ 08043

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Dates:

- **September 14:** Project: Make Your Own Affirmation Stationary and Greeting Cards
- **September 18:** Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors
- **October 5:** Project: Make Your Own Memory/Keepsake Box
- **October 19:** Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors
- **November 9:** Project: Make Your Own Mosaic Mirror
- **November 30:** Project: Affirmation Bead Bracelets for Cancer Survivors by Cancer Survivors

This class is free for cancer survivors and there is no cost for materials. Please register for each class so the appropriate number of supplies can be provided. Please call:

1.800.8.COOPER (1.800.826.6737).

You can also register online at events.cooperhealth.org.

Therapeutic Massage, Reflexology and Reiki Days

Attention all cancer survivors; Come enjoy the mind body spirit benefits of therapeutic chair massage, reflexology and reiki.

Dates: September 13 & 27; October 11 & 25; November 8 & 29

Time: 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

*Reiki from 9:30 a.m. – 12 noon

Location: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

Bonnie's Book Club

A story is always better if you have someone to share it with... what could be better than sharing it with a group of friends who have read it too?

- **September 28, 2011**
The Smallest Color
by Bill Roorbach
- **October 26, 2011**
Safe Haven by Nicholas Sparks
- **November 30, 2011**
Juliet by Anne Fortier

Time: 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Location: Town Square Building,
931 Centennial Building, Voorhees, NJ 08043

This book club is for cancer survivors. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact **Bonnie Mehr** at **856.325.6646**



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John P. Sheridan, Jr., President and CEO



Always Remember to Laugh

by Sandee Vogelson

My name is Sandee Vogelson and one year ago, I was diagnosed with Stage 3 ovarian cancer.

I don't remember being scared, but I was.

I don't remember crying, but I did.

I remember losing my hair.

I remember that I could not talk to anyone about my cancer. If I did, it would be real.

It was the craziest time of my life.

A year has passed.

I love washing my hair and not wearing makeup – I deserve a break.



Sandee Vogelson

I love my new hot pink bicycle with a basket for my Yorkie, Puddin.

I love my friends and family and Cooper.

When I was young, I wanted to belong to a sorority, but I never had time.

Cancer may not be the sorority I dreamed of, but we women with the tell-

tale scarves and the curly hair and the puffy eyes are joined together with an emotional bond. And when you smile at me, I feel better.

I remember that I am still me – a fighter who gets the last word.

I always remember to laugh.

Update:

It was discovered in a follow-up scan ordered by Dr. David Warshal at Cooper Cancer Institute, that I had lung cancer in both lungs. After much consultation by various Cooper Doc's the decision was to perform surgery. February was the right lung, May was the left and no chemo needed as Dr. Frank Bowen got it all. I love Cooper and their cancer team that keeps me going and affords me the ability to answer when asked how I am, "Not bad for an old broad."

Hope In Bloom

Hope in Bloom Inc. was founded on the belief that gardens have been proven to be healing places for the body, mind and soul. In South Jersey we are offering garden maintenance and some improvements to breast cancer patients. They offer small indoor container gardens to patients who live in apartments or condos.

For more information please contact **Donna Helmes** at **609.605.2112**. Please check out their website at **www.HopeinBloom.org**.

Pink Roses Teal Magnolias

Join the fight against breast and gynecologic cancer!

Sunday, October 23, 2011

10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Crowne Plaza, Cherry Hill, NJ

Tickets: \$100 per person

Benefactors: \$1,000 special recognition in program book and two tickets

2011 Honorees:

David P. Warshal, MD
Head, Division of
Gynecologic Oncology,
Cooper Cancer Institute

Tamara A. LaCouture, MD
Chief, Department of
Radiation Oncology,
Cooper Cancer Institute

Additional sponsorship and program book advertising available. For information or to purchase tickets, please call Suzanne Winderman at **856.963.6704** or Winderman-suzanne@CooperHealth.edu.



Gurl About Town

by Teresa Kao

I never thought that one day I would make a wind chime that produces a beautiful and clear tinkling sound. I didn't know that when you rub your fingers on a lavender plant, it leaves a wonderfully soothing aroma on your fingers. But these are just some of the things I learned at the Creative Arts for Healing Workshops offered by the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program at Cooper. I made a beautiful wind chime using metal tubes, beads and driftwood. It's hanging from a doorway in my home. I touch it whenever I pass it to hear the tinkling sound. I decorated a clay pot using stencils and paints and planted lavender in it. Now the pot of lavender is sitting on a bookshelf by the window in my home. Whenever I want the soothing smell of lavender, I can just rub my fingers on the leaves of my potted lavender.

The Workshops started in April of this year. Andrea of the Kris Kelly Foundation offered her time, creative energy and patience to teach us many wonderful projects. We met twice a month, once to make affirmation bead bracelets for cancer survivors and once to work on other creative projects. We made wind chimes, decorated clay pots and planted lavender. Working with my fellow survivors is a very calming and healing experience. Their courage, grace, wisdom and spirits are inspirations for me. The camaraderie among us really fortifies me. When we work on the bead bracelets for other cancer survivors, we put our hearts and minds on arranging the colors and stringing the beads. The fact that we're making something with our hearts for others adds more meaning to the experience.

In addition to the monthly affirmation bead bracelets making, the projects for this fall also include affirmation stationary and greeting cards, memory/keep-sake box and mosaic mirror. I am really looking forward to these projects. I encourage everyone who hasn't tried these workshops to attend at least one of them. The Creative Arts for Healing Workshops have done wonders for me.

I love the wind chime I made and my potted lavender. The tinkling sound of the wind chime and the lavender aroma on my fingers make me feel calm and peaceful, and they fill my heart with gratitude.



About The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program

The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program enhances the quality of life and wellness of individuals touched by cancer – including patients, their caregivers and family.

It utilizes therapies that focus on mind, body and spirit while supporting mainstream medical care. The complementary therapies offered through CCI are designed to lessen the pain, stress and anxiety associated with cancer. Therapies also assist in managing the side effects of traditional treatments such as radiation and chemo-therapy. While complementary therapies cannot cure cancer, many patients have found them to be helpful in managing and coping with their cancer. While traditional medicine and healthcare treat the illness, complementary medicine therapies help promote wellness in the whole person.

In addition to the therapeutic benefits, taking part in complementary medicine therapies empowers participants – providing survivors with an opportunity to take a positive, active role in their care and treatment.

All therapies and programs offered through the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program are available at no cost and are open to all cancer patients and their caregivers, regardless of where they receive their treatment. These programs, lectures and activities offer patients access to social, educational and support opportunities. Programs are offered weekly throughout the year. Our outpatient complementary medicine programs include:

- Restorative yoga
- Therapeutic chair massage
- Mindfulness meditation
- Qi Gong
- Behavioral health workshops
- Body movement classes
- Creative arts
- Educational seminars
- The Tea Cart (brought to outpatients while receiving chemotherapy)
- Horticultural therapy

This program is wholly funded through philanthropic support. As the reputation and demand for our programs and services grow, so does our need for funding. **If you are interested in learning more about The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program or would like to make a donation, please contact, Bonnie Mehr, Program Manager, at 856.325.6646.** 🍁

One Courageous Soldier

by Karen Schaefer

My name is Karen Schaefer. In 2006 I was diagnosed with breast cancer, only to find out that it had gone to my liver and brain. I was devastated but now I am blessed to say that I am cancer-free today. I believe the key part in surviving this journey is having family and friends to support you. All throughout this experience my children have also been affected. My daughter, Morgan, is a fantastic writer and expresses her emotions of my voyage through her poems. I would like to share this piece of writing with you and to remind everyone to never stop smiling.

Mind, Body, and Spirit

by Morgan Schaefer

When I was a child I remember being free

When I was a child I only worried about me

*When I was a child I would ask questions
unafraid of the answer*

*But being a child was before I was introduced
to cancer*

*Cancer is like the monster hiding under
your bed*

Cancer is that unspoken word that is finally said

*Cancer is something that can make your life
lose control*



Morgan and mom, Karen.

*But you see, cancer cannot infect the soul
Your mind is more powerful than anything,
of that I'm sure*

*These bad times in life is just God seeing
how much your spirit can endure*

Life was never made out to be a game so easily won

*It's made out to be a journey with problems
that weigh a ton*

*Cancer is something that can take a person
away forever*

PHYSICIAN PROFILE:

Dr. Sucha Asbell: Attention to detail pays off

by Linda Lotz

After checking in for my first appointment with Dr. Sucha Asbell, a radiation oncologist at Cooper Cancer Institute in Voorhees NJ, my husband and I were ushered



Dr. Sucha Asbell

into a small room. Thirty minutes later Dr. Asbell arrived, apologized profusely and proceeded to recommend a course of radiation as part of my cancer treatment. As I later came to understand, Dr. Asbell is the kind of doctor who takes



Linda Lotz

the time to be with a patient until all the questions are answered and all the issues are addressed. Her thoroughness and attention to detail would soon play

an important role in my treatment.

It was important for me to tell Dr. Asbell that I am from Harrisburg, PA and was active in the movement to keep the Three Mile Island Unit 1 closed

(continued on page 8)





But cancer can be conquered if we try together

We are all warriors on this battlefield of life

And when we kill the enemy we have faith on the blade of our knife

This disease is the beast we all want to destroy

But I think everything bad in life is really just a ploy

Disasters give you appreciation and make you love a little more

Without them you wouldn't grow up and become mature

My mom battled cancer and is now the strongest person I will ever know

My family is an unfinished quilt and she is the string used to sew

The cancer is an invisible tug that pulled us toward each other

Without it I wouldn't have this strong admiration for my mother

We all must believe that this is not the end

We all must believe that we have our lives to defend

Yes cancer cannot infect the soul

Because we have courageous soldiers playing their role

And we have caretakers, family, and friends

And we will have someone to say "Thank God" to when it all ends

Whether that means being cancer-free or going to a better place

We know that with bravery we will have won this race

No suffered soul should be left as the only one

Because we can fight and stand side by side when the battle is done

I'm sending this message to anyone who can hear it

Cancer can only be conquered using the mind, body, and spirit

These three tools together can slay the wildest thing

And in the end love is what they bring

Today I say to you, not to worry

Because life shouldn't be lived in frustration and hurry

When someone says the word cancer, do not shiver in pain

Just think there will be a ray of light after all this rain 🍃

Tribute to a Special Friend

by Bonnie Mehr, Editor, the Survivor Times

If the measurement of one's life is in good deeds, and not length of time, Michael Freilick will be forever eternal. Shortly after writing the article below, our dear friend to the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program, fellow contributor to the Survivor Times, fellow cancer survivor, beloved husband, father and family man passed away suddenly this past July.

Mike lived 28 years past his initial cancer diagnosis, and in those years he was a champion of several causes; life-long advocate for DES Sons and all DES exposed, worked with CONTACT community help lines and telephone reassurance program, lectured for years about prostate exams and prevention at local

high schools, and supported his fellow cancer survivors in more ways than I have space to write. As demonstrated in the numerous articles Mike wrote for the Survivor Times, his common theme was to encourage other cancer survivors to "experience happiness, stay positive, and never give up on your hopes and dreams." He dared to use his voice and share his very personal trials and tribulations with the valiant goal of inspiring other survivors. Bottom line... he really cared about other people. Michael Freilick will be remembered as a prince among men. His last article, "A Personal Story" stands as a beautiful tribute to what really mattered to him in this world.



The Freilick family

A Personal Story by Michael S. Freilick

Cancer is a scary word. I was first diagnosed with it in 1983 when I was 30 years old. I was a single man at the time. I wanted to date, fall in love, and get married. This is hard enough to do anyway, but I found with cancer involved, it was even harder...but not impossible.

I tried to date in 1983 and 1984 while going through chemotherapy and several surgeries. That was tough. In early 1985, I was finally ready to date, but I had some issues.

As I met women, I had a problem deciding when the appropriate time was to tell them that I was a cancer survivor. Oh, and by the way, I was also infertile. Most women in the age group that I was dating wanted to have children and being infertile put a glitch in that situation.

I continued to date, and I decided not to tell women about my cancer unless I wished to see them again. Around 1990, I met a woman who seemed to understand what I had been through. Unbeknownst to me, she was worried about how she would tell me that she had infertility problems and did not know if she could conceive a child. On our 3rd date, we both communicated our concerns and talked about our interest in adoption should our relationship progress. In 1992, we got married, and adopted a newborn baby girl in 1998. Our daughter will turn 13 later on this year.

As I write this article, my wife and I are celebrating our 19th wedding anniversary. As you can see, cancer survivors CAN experience happiness.

If you are a cancer survivor, NEVER give up on your hopes and dreams. They can come true if you believe they can and are willing to keep trying. 🍃

Having Trouble Eating Five Fruits and Vegetables Every Day? Juicing Can Help, Especially When Appetite is Low

by Loretta O'Donnell

Now that summer is over and the abundance of fresh local produce has ebbed, you may be finding it harder to consume the FDA recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. If you're like me, I enjoy salads and vegetables most of the time, but on chemo weeks, the loss of appetite and other side effects makes these foods less appealing and a challenge to eat for awhile.

Raw fruits and vegetables are a great source of fiber, enzymes and phytonutrients and can easily be blended into a juice or smoothie, particularly great when you don't have the energy or time to prepare a meal. Juicing isn't new, of course, but has been gaining in popularity in recent years along with healthy eating trends.

If you don't have a juicer, you can start with your blender and see what works best for your taste and budget. The internet, libraries and book stores have many recommendations and

recipes for healthy juices and smoothies. I find it handy to keep bags of frozen fruit in the freezer which keep through the winter and are fast to mix in with greens or yogurt for flavor and texture. I also like smoothies to take with me when I'm out and about instead of coffee for energy. Organic fruits and vegetables are best when available. Prepared smoothies can be kept in the refrigerator up to three days in a closed container.

The Cancer Institute's outpatient oncology dietician Alicia Michaux notes that juices should not be an exclusive form of food, but rather complementary to a well balanced diet. If you're buying commercially prepared juices, she recommends buying pasteurized for safety from possible bacteria that could be harmful if undergoing chemotherapy and white blood cell counts are low. 🍌

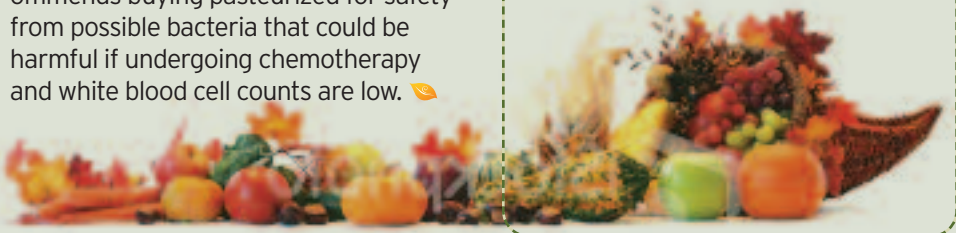
Fall Juicing Recipes

Fall Green Smoothie

- 3 cups fresh spinach
- 1 package frozen berries
- 1 tsp. flaxseed oil (aids digestion)
- 1 ring pineapple
- Mix in juicer or blender; Can garnish with pineapple or orange slice

Green Ginger Smoothie

- 5-6 leaves swiss chard
- 1 apples, sliced into quarters
- 2 pears, sliced into quarters
- 1 banana
- 2 cups water
- ½ inch fresh ginger
- Mix in juicer or blender; Can sprinkle cinnamon or nutmeg on top



Physician Profile

(continued from page 7)

after Unit II suffered the worst nuclear accident in the US, back in March 1979. In 1982, I traveled to Japan and met hibakusha – victims of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and other people who had become ill from radiation exposure. I was scared. All I could think of were these wonderful people whose lives had been turned upside down by radiation.

It turns out Dr. Asbell practiced medicine in York, PA, not far from the TMI plant, so she was aware of the questions regarding how much radiation escaped during the accident and whether this radiation was responsible for what – anecdotally – seemed to be a sharp increase in cancer following the accident. Knowing that she understood my fears helped me move forward.

Dr. Asbell asked me to have a CAT scan to plan my radiation treatments and to act as a baseline map that could be used following the treatments. Early

in her practice, Dr. Asbell adopted the practice of personally reviewing all of her patients' films. After reviewing my test results, she called to say my lymph nodes were enlarged. This could mean anything from hepatitis to lymphoma.

She became a detective, trying to piece together what was happening: A PET scan confirmed lymph nodes throughout my body were enlarged. Another test ruled out hepatitis, then a surgeon recommended against doing a biopsy of several lymph nodes. After several weeks of trying to solve the mystery Dr. Asbell reviewed some papers from before I started my cancer treatment; hidden in one of the reports was a recommendation that spots on my arms and torso be shown to a dermatologist. Perhaps the earlier doctor didn't tell me about this recommendation or I completely misunderstood him; either way, the spots faded away without a diagnosis or treatment.

A series of blood tests quickly confirmed her theory that my problem was Lyme disease. Finally, there was an explanation for why I had aches and pains

– and no energy for almost six months! Following a visit to an infectious disease specialist, who prescribed a month of antibiotics, I was ready to begin my radiation treatments.

It turns out that we made a small part of medical history: no one has ever reported using a PET scan to confirm the presence of Lyme disease. We are now awaiting approval from my health insurance company to do a follow-up PET scan – along with showing that my radiation treatment was successful – it will hopefully show that the course of antibiotics eliminated all traces of Lyme disease.

POSTSCRIPT: During my six month follow-up in June, Dr. Asbell noted that, as a result of this experience, her colleagues have become much more sensitized to the prevalence of Lyme disease here in South Jersey. One team member found a tick, carefully removed it, and began the three week wait to see if any red splotches appear on her skin. For more information about symptoms and prevention, check: <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme>. 🍌

