Jeanette Cattan recalls learning about the Look Good, Feel Better program as a student at Whittier Vocational High School 20 years ago. The program helps people with cancer deal with the appearance-related side effects of treatment. Years later, at age 38, married with three children under the age of six, her own breast cancer diagnosis came as a tremendous shock. She wanted the best available treatment but she wanted to stay close to those who needed and relied on her.

Jeanette underwent six months of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation, a mastectomy, and reconstructive surgery. She credits her doctors, nurses, and the support services at Women’s Health Care, the Gerrish Breast Care Center, the Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) and Riversong Plastic Surgery for helping to take the fear away. She was completely at ease with her care team, who she calls, “AMAZING.”

Jeanette says it was Dr. Peter Hartmann, Medical Director of the Gerrish Breast Care Center, whose compassionate coaching helped instill in her a P.M.A. - a positive mental attitude.

Treatment eventually affected Jeanette’s appearance. The loss of her hair and eyebrows started to drain her confidence. A hair stylist by training, she instinctively knew that presenting her best self to the world was an important aspect of her recovery. She remembered the Look Good, Feel Better program she had learned about in high school and sought a consult.

The nearest program was in Burlington. There, she found support and a calling. During the 2-hour group consultation, people opened up to each other about what they were feeling and shared coping tips. Before the session, she had wondered if she’d ever be truly happy again. Sharing these feelings helped her to heal.

After she regained strength, Jeanette worked with the Center to establish a Look Good, Feel Better program at Anna Jaques Hospital (AJH). Today, as a volunteer, Jeanette teaches patients beauty techniques that manage the appearance-related side effects of cancer treatment, including providing access to a wig bank. Jeanette personally styles and can even highlight certain wigs to make the patient feel most like themselves again. Jeanette’s generous work, which includes free lessons on skin and nail care, cosmetics, wigs and turbans, accessories and styling, helps people with cancer find some normalcy at a time when life is by no means normal.

In her own words, Jeanette encourages cancer patients to “take the time to take care of you. You are stronger and braver than you think in mind, body, and spirit................ OWN THAT!”
Dear Friends of Anna Jaques Hospital,

Hearing the words “you have cancer” is life-altering. Suddenly, what was suspected and feared becomes real and the future becomes uncertain. Your life, and the lives of those who love and care for you, take on a different, more urgent meaning.

Preparing this edition of Giving Well brought back memories of my own parents’ experiences with cancer and hospice care. While both struggles were very different, they brought on similar emotional rollercoasters. I now think about life and loss with greater appreciation as a family caregiver.

I interviewed many patients of both the Gerrish Breast Care Center and the Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with BIDMC, and their care partners, for this newsletter. Each had their own unique story and some are still on their cancer journey. I was moved by their gratitude for their professional care team, as well as the network of community partners that provided emotional support and innovative integrative therapies to the patient and their families as they progressed through treatment.

Patients frequently referred to their AJH and partner care team as “angels” who wipe their tears, hold their hand, and eventually make them smile again.

Cancer is a challenge. As these pages illustrate, the AJH community is at the ready with exceptional, compassionate care, heroic volunteerism, and a dedicated community of partners that treat our patients as family. We are pleased to share their stories of courage and celebrate survivorship.

As we enter the season of giving, I want to express our heartfelt thanks to all who give so generously of their time and resources to sustain AJH. We are truly grateful. Happy Holidays!

Mary Williamson
Executive Director
Vice President for Development
mwilliamson@ajh.org | 978-463-1211

Remembering Robin DeMerritt

Beloved friend of AJH, Corporator, and past President of the AJH Aid Association, Robin DeMerritt, passed away this fall. Robin bravely battled intestinal cancer for more than four years. A graduate of the Jordan Marsh Executive Training Program, with a flair for fashion, Robin worked for John Farley Clothiers in Newburyport until retiring in 2014. Friendly, kind, and devoted to her community, she gave generously of her time and spirit for organizations she believed in, including Anna Jaques and the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. The Foundation is grateful to Robin’s husband of 46 years, Steve, and the many family members and friends who made memorial contributions to AJH in her memory.

AJH is grateful to companies like Exelon, General Electric, Gorton’s Seafood and IBM, who provide matching gifts to our hospital through their Employee Matching Gift program. Consider doubling the impact of your annual donation to AJH with a matching gift.
Donor support keeps our community healthy. AJH is supported by our employees, grateful patients and many individuals, businesses and foundations that believe in our mission, and trust that we are responsible, prudent stewards of their gifts.

Meet the Brown Family - Grateful Patients

Dennis Brown and his wife, Joanna, sought expert opinions to properly diagnose his cancer. The care was professional and the volunteers were helpful. However frequent commutes into Boston, the massive size of the facilities, and the “rushed” attention added to their stress and anxiety. When his BIDMC doctor suggested that Dennis could receive treatment in his own community, they decided to give it a try. Upon visiting the Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with BIDMC, they had a completely different experience. The drive was short and convenient. Their doctor introduced them to the entire staff by saying, “Meet the Brown Family” and the nurses took the time to get to know them personally and understand their needs.

The Browns demonstrated their gratitude for the compassionate care they are receiving with letters of appreciation, and four generous donations, designated to the Center. We are truly grateful for this support and wish Dennis well on his cancer journey.

Seas & Greetings - Donor In-Kind Support

AJH and the Community Health Foundation were pleased to have participated in the Sixth Annual Sea Festival of Trees. Named “Seas and Greetings,” the Anna Jaques tree was designed, built, and generously donated by Kathy Connors, secretary of the foundation board, and her husband, Bob.

The AJH entry creatively represented Anna Jaques' coastal heritage and our ties to the sea through the use of nautical ornaments and a wooden lobster trap as a base. The Anna Jaques logo was reflected in the sailboat tree topper. Thank you, Kathy and Bob, for your creative in-kind donation that provided AJH visibility at this popular seasonal extravaganza.

Paying it Forward - Bequest helps uninsured patients

Jeffrey Lee Healey grew up in the Point Shore neighborhood of Amesbury. His interest in waterways and the sea was encouraged by friends made at Lowell's Boat Shop, who adopted him as a mascot. There he stoked the pot belly stove and closely observed the work of the older boatmasters. He was a lifelong learner who became an engineer and contributed to his community through his involvement in town government. Once retired, he mentored and supported veterans, assisting with numerous humanitarian projects. Throughout his life, Jeffrey experienced many losses which he handled with great dignity. At a particular time of need, he was treated with kindness and respect at AJH. Jeffrey passed away earlier this year and bestowed upon AJH a bequest gift in his will of $10,000 to be used for the “sole purpose of providing assistance to uninsured patients.” We are grateful to Jeffrey, and his devoted sister, Jill, who shared his story.
October Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Each October, the Gerrish Breast Care Center at AJH partners with the community to raise awareness during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Gerrish Breast Care Center
Anna Jaques Hospital

Celebrating Survival: “Couture for a Cure” was the grand finale of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, co-presented by AJH and Institution for Savings. More than 200 swag-bag carrying guests shopped the Look Good, Feel Good Marketplace, took a chance on luxe raffle items, and enjoyed the October 25th luncheon and fashion show at the Blue Ocean Event Center. Proceeds from the day benefitted the Gerrish Breast Care Center, which is celebrating its 5th year anniversary.

Following lunch, the audience was treated to a fashion show featuring the latest styles from the region’s shops. Models adorning the pink carpeted runway included cancer survivors, along with several local “rock stars,” and members of the Gerrish Breast Care team, including Lucy, the therapy dog.
Presenting Sponsors:
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Marissa Cap
Olivia Cap
Kathy Connors
Dorene Dupuis
Cheryl Kubat
Stephanie Manual
Gayle Matheson
Joan Miller
Meghan Pursley
Mimi Shenk
Wilbur Shenk

Thank you to our sponsors, participating vendors, in-kind donors, and volunteers.

Emcee Karen Andreas: Regional Publisher for North of Boston Media Group

Survivor Models: Kathy Berman, Mary Rocco, Jeanette Cattan, Megan Tierney, Dana Marshall, Christine Turner, Jeanne Carter, with Gerrish Breast Care Center Nurse Navigator, Kathy Porter

INTERLOCKS: Winner of the 2018 Pink Up the Port Photo Contest

Annual Pink Pancake Breakfast
Atria Merrimack Place

Megan Tierney: Survivor Model and Newburyport Police Officer
For many cancer patients, the scariest part of the diagnosis is the end of treatment. They have less regular contact with their care team, and are still dealing with their new normal. Drawing from their own personal and professional connections with cancer, and input from cancer survivors, five volunteers came together with a vision to offer surviving cancer patients innovative options for healing and support through treatment and beyond.

Two of the team, yoga therapist, Carol Gamble, and Reiki practitioner, Dina Crawford, are active volunteers in the Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with BIDMC, and are strong proponents of “integrative oncology.” It is a term now commonly used to describe the use of complementary therapies that studies have shown to be safe and beneficial with conventional medical cancer treatments.

These options also help patients take a more active role in their own care. Those most commonly used for cancer-related pain include mind-body therapies, acupuncture, and Reiki. They are effective in reducing stress and anxiety, which help people cope with pain as well as other symptoms of disease and treatment.

In June of 2018, the group launched the North of Boston Cancer Resource (NBCR) website. The online directory contains hundreds of therapeutic programs and providers that complement conventional treatment. Resources include everything from acupuncture and art therapy to nutrition, relaxation techniques, spiritual direction, and support with the appearance-related effects of treatment. The portal includes access to organizations and agencies that can provide meals, financial resources, transportation, emotional and well-being support, as well as books, articles, apps, and more.

Amesbury resident, Lucille Comeau, was being treated at AJH with chemotherapy after surgery to address ovarian cancer which had spread to her colon and gallbladder. There were many days when Lucille was frightened, but working with Carol and Dina made a difference. Carol introduced Lucille to mindful breathing, meditation, and relaxation techniques at her bedside, which helped ease anxiety and symptoms. Reiki treatments also helped Lucille relax and even fall asleep while she received her chemotherapy infusions.

As she made progress, Lucille engaged in some of the programs listed on the NBRC website. She enrolled in the Encore Program at the YWCA Greater Newburyport, where she connected with other survivors, and gave yoga a go with Carol at Roots to Wings. These integrative therapies helped to build her strength, relieve stress, and build meaningful relationships with others also on a cancer journey.

YWCA Encore Program

As Lucille Comeau attests, incorporating gentle land exercises, warm water pool workouts, relaxation techniques, and peer group support, has been a safe, fun and therapeutic addition to her conventional treatment regimen. Available at the YWCA Greater Newburyport, the YWCA Encore is a rolling registration program that is open to anyone who has experienced cancer. Participation is free and no membership is required.

Contact: ywcanewburyport.org
978–465–9922

“Encore gave me my life back.”
Volunteer-led Cancer Support Group Meets Monthly

Volunteer Susan Smith has a deep connection with AJH and to the cancer services here. A resident of Newburyport and born at AJH, she lost her mom to breast cancer at age 49. As a result, Susan became involved with the local chapter of the American Cancer Society. Sixteen years ago, at age 42, she herself was diagnosed with invasive ductile carcinoma and was treated by Drs. Spieler and Hartmann. Her infusion nurse was Laura Rossi. “I was taken such good care of,” she recalls. Six years ago, nurses at the new Cancer Center, now under Laura’s direction, wanted to start a support group. They reached out to Susan, who is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) and psychotherapist in private practice. Susan agreed to help get the group started and over the next five years, she facilitated free monthly sessions. The group re-formed after a brief hiatus, and now meets regularly, with the additional volunteer support of LICSW, Moray Wilson, a case manager at the Center. Participants range from patients in treatment and their family members, partners, caregivers, survivors and those dealing with grief.

“I was taken such good care of.”
- Susan Smith

The sessions provide participants an opportunity to share their cancer experience if they choose. Hope, comfort, and lessening the feel of isolation are modest goals. Inevitably, people hear something they can relate to, and they learn from one another, building empathy among those still in treatment.

Cancer Support Group - Surviving and Thriving, open to all, meets the 3rd Monday of each month, 5:30–7:00 p.m. in the Cancer Center.

Pet Therapy - Our Canine Volunteers

Pet therapy, or animal-assisted therapy, has been gaining popularity in hospital settings, including AJH. Studies suggest there are some important benefits obtained from these furry visitors. Our four-legged volunteers, Skye, Lucy, Benji, and Natti, along with their human colleagues, Anne Tuthill, Karen Hartmann, Lisa Andrews, and Janet Dendy, visit patients in several areas, including the Cancer Centers.

The friendly nuzzle almost instinctively helps our patients relax as well as buffer the stress of treatment.

Some observed and reported benefits include:

- A calming effect or improved mood
- Decreased anxiety in hospitalized patients
- Decreased loneliness and social isolation
- A sense of emotional connection

As an added plus, it’s been found that pet therapy not only helps those with physical and emotional needs for those undergoing treatment or hospitalized, but it also appears to benefit the entire family and the hospital staff.
Treating the Whole Person

Grant supports outreach to address patient distress at Cancer Center

In 2016, the Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with BIDMC hired Moray Wilson, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW), as a case manager to help assess and address the mental and social health stressors often associated with a patient’s cancer diagnosis and treatment. The pilot program was funded by a grant from the Newburyport Society for the Relief of Aged Women (NSFRAW). Additional investment from NSFRAW this year increased the availability and frequency of Moray’s patient outreach to address the growing need.

Distress screening of cancer patients is a standard of care recommended by the Oncology Nurses Society (ONS) and American College of Surgeons (ACOS). It requests that all patients be assessed for distress using a scale similar to that of a pain scale (1-10). A score of 4 or higher triggers a referral to a social worker, psychologist, or appropriate social service.

Moray helps to ensure that the clinic is serving the “whole patient” and not just addressing his or her medical needs. Most importantly, she connects on a human level with patients who are experiencing distress, or who could benefit from some support or other services such as the North of Boston Cancer Resource Center.

“I truly consider it a privilege to be invited into patients’ lives, during what is often a very difficult time.”
— Moray Wilson, LICSW

During screening, patients and their families can offer reports of social and psychological obstacles such as depression and fatigue, problems with mobility, poor communication with physicians, lack of family support, financial problems, loss of job, and lack of adequate health insurance. These obstacles can add to the suffering created by the illness, prevent adherence to prescribed treatment and interfere with a patient’s ability to cope.

In her role, Moray speaks with new patients over the phone, or visits patients while they receive treatment at the clinic, helping to coordinate resource referrals, consulting with the nurses and providers regarding patient needs, and simply being another supportive presence for patients as they navigate through the treatment process.

While not all individuals treated for cancer face these problems, some do. When proper resources are available, the ability to manage one’s illness is improved. This innovative and evidence-based outreach program has proven successful, and we are just beginning to scratch the surface to address the demand.

Calender of Events

- December 4th: Aid Association Tree of Light
- December 6th: Aid Association Craft Fair
- December 7th: Aid Association Sleigh Ride
- April 5th: Aid Association Great Chefs’ Night

Next Hospital Tour: Thursday, January 17, 2019

Learn more about AJH and the many services it offers to our community by taking a small group tour. We love to show off all that your generous support has made possible. We guarantee you’ll be impressed by the recent renovations to the facilities and ever-expanding services devoted to compassionate patient care.

RSVP 978-463-1176 or email scap@ajh.org