

The Michael H. Flanagan Foundation

Volume Number I

Spring 2003

From the desk of Christine Griffin....

Since the establishment of the Foundation ten months ago, we are proud to announce that more than \$25,000 has been contributed from our generous supporters. Our first benefit, this past September, was an amazing success and such a special night. The silent auction raised nearly \$10,000 through a wide variety of items including a fully outfitted kayak donated by Rian Wilkinson of **Marine Rescue Products**, original artwork by **Jim Bush**, **Boston Bruins** box seats, a golf outing at **Carnegie Abbey** and a wine and hors d'oeuvre party at your home to name just a few. Fabulous food provided by **Taste of Curiosity** catering company, two lively bars, and a lovely selection of cello music added to the night - **John Meehan** was kind enough to provide the great sound system. In addition, special thanks must be extended to Sandi and Richard Oster and Ed Arsenault for the torch lit walk to our home, the amazing greenery and cozy outdoor fire surrounded by adirondacks that completed the chilly September evening. We owe sincere thanks to everyone who was able to participate in the evening. Your response made it clear to us that establishing the Foundation was absolutely the right thing to do as a special tribute to Michael. I know that Michael would have enjoyed the evening, and with that in mind, the details of planning fell into place.

On behalf of the Foundation we have been meeting monthly with the team at the New England Medical Center ("NEMC") in Boston to assess needs and put our resources to work. Several grants have been distributed under the guidance of Judith Kahn, the social worker for bone marrow transplant ("BMT") patients and families. These grants have ranged from \$150 to \$500 and have been used for a variety of needs ranging from holiday gifts for the children of a patient to paying utility bills for a temporarily unemployed patient. It is our goal to continue to provide aid to cover these unforeseen costs of cancer. Your contributions are making a difference in people's lives!

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NEMC Perspective Judith Kahn

As social worker for the bone marrow transplant patients, I am in a unique position to hear about the non-medical needs that add stress to an already difficult situation when patients are hospitalized. Cancer is a very democratic illness that does not choose its subjects according to their resources and capacity to cope. All the problems that people have when they receive their diagnosis do not magically disappear so the patient and family can devote all their energy to treatment and recovery. For example, if finances are already tight, all the extra costs, such as gas, parking, and food for a visiting family member begin to add up until either critical sacrifices have to be made to pay bills, or a crisis occurs at home to add to the turmoil of illness.

One of the first acts of the Foundation was to set up a grant program whereby we can relieve some of the immediate needs that patients and families encounter. This holiday season, the first in the Foundation's existence, I was able to use Michael's fund to provide a family with money to buy seasonal decorations and gifts that they thought they would have to forego. In a more critical situation, I called on the fund to pay most of a month's rent for a family who had gotten behind when their breadwinner needed to take some unpaid leave from work to be with his loved one in the hospital. While these grants are not large relative to the total cost of care, the difference they made in the lives of two families is enormous.

I hope to expand the scope of the grant program as Michael's foundation grows. The quick access I have to funds through the board is a unique and invaluable feature of this assistance program. I am making all caregivers to our patients aware, so that they can listen for opportunities to use this assistance. In keeping with the mission of Michael's Foundation, to help the grant program afford represents much more than money in mental and emotional relief.

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Our Mission: To comfort bone marrow transplant patients during their hospital stay. Through the Foundation, it is our goal to enhance the patients' quality of life

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From the desk of Christine Griffin....

It is so rewarding to provide assistance, even something as small as one month of ballet lessons for the child of a patient so that the family feels a sense of continuity in their lives.

Over the past several months, we have also focused our efforts on the creation of "comfort bags" for patients arriving on the BMT unit at NEMC for the first time. These gift bags are designed with needs of the patient in mind and filled with items to comfort them during their stay. Several companies have been extremely generous with their contributions as we began to identify and source items to include in the bags. **Turtle Fur Company** in Morrisville, VT and the **Ski House** in Somerset, MA donated all of the hats for the year; **Lorden Labs** donated eye packs; the **Audubon Society** gift shop at the **Environmental Education Center** provided a substantial discount on gifts included in the bags; and **Waldenbooks** provided a discount on journals and books. Approximately twenty items comprise these bags - so every little bit helps us to preserve resources to help others down the road.

In addition to the comfort bags, we initiated a much needed update of the BMT floor's video library. **Blockbuster Video** has provided a tremendous discount as we have purchased over forty recent releases to add to the library. In addition, a pasta dinner was prepared by Katie Flanagan and Lara and Morgan Murphy and shared with the families at the NEMC's Neely House during Thanksgiving week. The Neely House serves as a temporary home to families of BMT patients during their hospital stay.

To date, the Foundation has been prudent in its distributions to benefit NEMC and its patients. We are presently considering the needs of the BMT floor - video phones, answering machines, more comfortable chairs, blanket warmers, exercise bikes and CD players to name a few. We will continue to assess the needs of the patients and decide how best to allocate the Foundation's resources in order to achieve its mission. Thank you again for your support

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**2003 Fall Benefit
Saturday, September XX, 2003**



What is in a "Comfort Bag"?

Phone cards, fleece stocking hats; relaxation CD's; soothing eye packs; a writing journal a book of affirmations, a lizard or turtle

Dear Friends,

Yes, the work of Michael's foundation is underway. We continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of so many. During these months of planning and development, we have spoken to many kind people about our mission. A common Thread in all of our interactions has been a willingness to support our work, a spirit of generosity, and a story of "someone they knew" who has traveled the journey. Each experience and each story affirms our belief that the Foundation can make a difference.

As Christine wrote, the evening of the benefit was "magical". Just as important as your incredible generosity was the gift of your presence. And for those who were unable to attend, we know you were there in spirit. You each supported us during Michael's long struggle, and your participation in the foundation continues to sustain us. Please know that your generosity is only part of the equation. Most important is the gift of you and your belief in our work.

Kathy and Mike

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Mr. and Mrs. Tom Casey and family who made donations as part of the Christmas gifts; and

The Tabor Academy faculty who