

# The Michael H. Flanagan Foundation

Volume Number 2

Spring 2004

## Our Mission

The mission of the Michael H. Flanagan Foundation is to comfort bone marrow transplant patients and their families. Through the Foundation, it is our goal to enhance the patients' quality of life.

**"The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit."**

Nelson Henderson

Dear Friends,

In some ways it does not seem possible that the **Michael H. Flanagan Foundation** is about to begin its **third** year. I am so proud of all that we have done and optimistic about the new branches we are about to explore as we grow towards our goal to make a difference in the lives of more and more people. It amazes me how often we have heard of "someone I know" undergoing some form of treatment for cancer. Although our foundation primarily focuses on leukemia and bone marrow transplant patients and families, the familiarity of all cancers is something we truly relate to.

For this reason and many others, our Fall Benefit has been such a great way to get many people together and celebrate what we can do to make a difference. Our **"Evening Under the Stars"** this past September was fantastic. We are proud to announce that over \$35,000 was contributed from our generous supporters. The Silent Auction raised nearly \$10,000 through a wide variety of donated items including Bruce Springsteen tickets at Shea Stadium, a pair of roundtrip airline tickets to anywhere in the United States, golf outings at TPC Boston and Carnegie Abbey, and a cocktail party for 30 guests catered by Taste of Curiosity, the fabulous caterers for the evening. We would also like to extend our thanks to Richard and Sandi Oster and Ed Arsenault for the amazing foliage and torches which provided a beautiful setting under the tent and stars, Joseph Cifelli for our music and to John Meehan for again providing us with an outstanding sound system. The Foundation was also fortunate to receive a gift of \$10,000 from Cowan Plastics of Providence, Rhode Island, Richard Oster, and Bill Dessel.

Over the course of the past year the Foundation has been able to provide over 40 comfort bags, 10 grants, funded a Reiki seminar for nurses under the guidance of a Reiki master, purchased a new television, dvd/vcd player, rolling cart, continued to expand the video library, begun to create a library of VCD's for Asian patients, and started planning the development of the newly renovated Family Room on North 8 at the New England Medical Center in Boston. Our monthly team meetings in Boston continue to keep us up to date. We had a Dedication Evening and Reception this past December at NEMC where a plaque was presented and the work of the

foundation was given a special recognition by the doctors, nurses and staff. This Family Room is also where we chose to hang my brother's plaque. It is in the Family room, outside of the closed off hallway which leads to the patients isolated rooms, where families and friends go to take a break and sit for a bit before going back in. This room is also the only place where children are allowed. We thought it would be in line with the mission of the Foundation to take this room on as a place to extend comfort to patients and families, be it through artwork, books, puzzles, games, and even a toy box...the closest thing to a home-like room. It will also be a place for literature about the foundation.

I must note that the comfort bags have been so well received that we have decided to pilot them at Miriam Hospital to see if we can start servicing leukemia patients in Rhode Island. We chose Miriam because that is where Michael received care for his leukemia before heading to Boston for his transplants. These bags have had a remarkable impact. I have been lucky enough to receive phone calls and letters from patients who were thrilled that they had a cozy hat for their cold, bald head or could tune out the HEPA filter hum with their CD walkman and take a nap. I believe that receiving these bags upon their arrival into their rooms gives them a boost that someone is really thinking about what they are about to face. Thanks to all of our supporters, we are comforting patients...and the many levels and needs of comfort continue to grow. **Thank you all for your tremendous and generous support.**

Take good care,

Christine E. Griffon

*Save The date...*

**Saturday, October 2, 2004**

*See page 2 for details*

**Courage**



**Integrity**



**Faith**

## A SOCIAL WORK UPDATE from TUFTS-NEMC

Judith Kahn, MSW

Over the past months, Michael's fund for urgent patient needs has continued to do good work. As many of you may not know, making it through a bone marrow transplant is not the end of the difficulties faced by people who survive the procedure. Almost everyone faces a long and challenging road to recovery, and few people are able to return to their former level of functioning for over a year. Many people continue to battle serious complications of treatment and graft vs. host disease well beyond the year marker.

Michael's fund has been a blessing to two of our patients dealing with the aftermath of transplant, neither of whom has been able to return to work. The foundation provided money to cover the dental work required by one young man who was affected by radiation therapy and also paid for specially made glasses for a woman whose eyesight suffered because of steroid medication. Because the glasses and the dental bridge were not "life or death" needs, the state funded insurance that these individuals must subscribe to until they can work again would not cover their cost. I was able to turn to the emergency fund knowing that the mission of the foundation is to provide for the comfort and quality of life for our patients, enhancement beyond simple survival.

Recently, Michael's beautiful plaque was put up in our BMT unit's family room. It is my hope that it will serve as a continual reminder to staff members, patients and family of the support that is available from the foundation. I especially welcome patient need referrals to the fund, as, in this most personal way, we can continue to touch individual lives in Michael's honor.

## A Nurse's Perspective

Nicole Zarella, RN

In oncology nursing we have limited control over the outcome of the disease process; but as caregivers we have an unlimited ability to profoundly effect the appraisal of the oncology experience. During such high-tech times, caring and touch have become almost absent. We on North 8 pride ourselves with being devoted to the creation of equilibrium between the two. Your vision and charity facilitate such achievements. The presence of the Foundation through both the comfort bags and grants to our patients helps to bring to light our amalgamation of knowledge, dedication, world-renowned medicine, and caring compassionate nursing.

The recipients of the comfort bags thus far have been delighted. They have expressed countless thanks for being empowered for their journey. From the phone cards enabling them to maintain their familial contacts in and out of state, to the personal journals allowing them to document their experiences, to the bath and body products assisting them with the maintenance of their skin integrity, each item in the bags has had an immense impact. It is such a satisfying experience to witness the smile spread across one's face as they excitedly explore the bag and to know (however transiently) the fright of being newly admitted to the BMT unit has been diminished.

As an RN...I extend my gratitude to the munificent contributors to the Michael H. Flanagan Foundation. Through your contributions, and collaboration with our staff, you make visible our number one objective...patient and family satisfaction and comfort! Thank you!

*Save The date...*

Saturday, October 2, 2004

**2004 Fall Benefit**

An evening of fine food, cocktails, silent auction and,  
this year, a band!



## **Tufts New England Medical Center Reception**

On December 10, 2003, the Tufts-NEMC Bone Marrow Transplant Unit hosted a reception to formally acknowledge Michael's foundation. Judith Kahn, MSW and Janice Maienza, RN, MSN, AOCN, coordinated the event with Christine and Kathy. The room was filled with fresh flowers, incredibly delicious desserts and very special people.

Fr. Jim Shaunessy, hospital chaplain, began the evening with an invocation and blessing. Judith Kahn reflected on the mission of the foundation and spoke about Michael's influence as a patient and now in the work being done in his memory. Clare Sullivan, nurse manager on the unit, shared her thoughts and expressed gratitude on behalf of the patients. Christine spoke about the importance of our relationship with the medical center staff and she took the opportunity to personally thank the many staff members of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit who were able to attend. The reception provided an opportunity for Michael's family to reconnect with those who knew him and hear feedback directly from those who are seeing the effects of the foundation's work.

## **Fall River Family Service**

On November 7, 2003, Christine and Kathy spoke at the monthly staff meeting of the Fall River Family Service. Family Service is a United Way Agency and Carolyn Curry, the director, asked if we would present the work of the foundation as one of many community resources available in the Fall River area. Although our focus is bone marrow transplant patients and their families, Carolyn felt that the social service and nursing staff needed to be aware of our work. We would like to thank the staff for their warm and supportive reception.

For further information about The Michael H. Flanagan Foundation please contact

Christine Griffin, Director or  
Kathleen Flanagan, Assistant Director  
15 Rumstick Drive, Barrington, RI 02806

## **Neely House Holiday Gathering**

During Michael's stay at New England Medical Center, we were gifted with the Cam Neely House. Neely House is a home for cancer patients and their families during their stay in Boston. Mike and Kathy lived in the house for six months and their children and grandchildren were able to stay when necessary. It is connected to the hospital proper and the accommodations provide all the comforts of home. Patricia Rowe is the manager and "house mother" and each year she organizes a holiday gathering for past and present residents. Mike and Kathy had the opportunity to visit with Cam and Scott Neely and they inspired us with their dedication and commitment. The Neely House and The Neely Cancer Fund exist to help cancer patients and their families during their treatment. In addition to the Neely House, they have funded the Neely Bone Marrow Collection Center and Laboratory and the Neely Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Unit is currently in development. It is our hope that the work of Michael's foundation in the area of patient comfort and support compliments their huge endeavors.

## **Fundraiser for St. Jude's Hospital**

For the past two years, the students at Joseph Case Junior High School in Swansea, Massachusetts made a sizable contribution to St. Jude's Children's Research hospital. Through the efforts of students, parents and school officials, over \$2800.00 was raised the first year and over \$2000.00 the second year. The students participated in a Math-a-thon and seventh grade math teacher, Marnie Lancashire promoted the idea of honoring Michael through their work. The students solicited pledges from members of the community in exchange for completing problem solving math work. Principal Christine Stanton noted, "This project turned a fund raiser into a learning experience about math and St. Jude's Hospital, and introduced the students to the idea of community service. Giving back to the community was part of who Michael was and represents the best of what schools can challenge young people to do." What a terrific effort!

# Thank You.

Thank you for your generous support. This list includes gifts received and processed between April 1, 2003 and April 1, 2004.

Gifts received after will be included in next year's listing.

Great care has been taken to ensure accuracy of all names. If an error has been made, please let us know by calling 401.247.7763 or email [ChristineGriffin@cox.net](mailto:ChristineGriffin@cox.net) and accept our sincere apologies.

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Kristen and Jay Coogan	B. Tucker Hastings	Christine McAniff



# Thank You.

## Continued

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## Fall Benefit Auction Item Contributors

Weirdgirl Creations  
 Jennifer Boland  
 Rhode Island Philharmonic  
 Bloomin Barn Nursery  
 Redwood Nursery  
 15 Point Road Restaurant  
 New Leaf salon  
 Back Into Balance Therapeutic Massage  
 Roberto's Restaurant  
 Brian Sullivan: UMASS Dartmouth  
 Baseball Camp  
 Ingrid Larsen  
 J. Thomas Darmody Photographer  
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 Jim and Jeanne Leffers  
 Mike and Kathy Flanagan  
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 Somerset Liquors  
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 Steve Flanagan  
 Taste of Curiosity  
 Teapots and Tassels  
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 Foxwoods Grand Pequot Tower  
 Providence Children's Museum  
 Roger Williams Zoo  
 Newport mansions  
 Environmental Education Center of the  
 Audubon Center  
 Rian & Susan Wilkinson,  
 Marine Rescue Products  
 Winthrop's Hallmark

**A CD walkman with relaxation CD's...**a way to relax, listen to music, listen to books, block out the continuous sound of the HEPA filter and to close your eyes and meditate during difficult procedures and tests

**A phone card with 800 minutes...**stays in touch with family and friends without the worry of outrageous hospital phone bills

**A Turtle-Fur fleece hat...**stay warm, look adorable and let this specially designed hat wick the perspiration away from you when those high temperatures finally break

**A colorful eye pack...**soothe your dry eyes by warming or cooling your eye pack and escape for a peaceful nap

**A journal...**or maybe a sketch book, just a place to put your thoughts or maybe leave them there. A good way to communicate when you don't feel like talking...or maybe you are a poet or artist

**A funny read...**nothing too heavy, just a few silly thoughts to help you cope on those frustrating days, laughing can be so therapeutic

**Personal hygiene items...**and not just any items, each one has been tested and approved just for your comfort, all very soft, no alcohol or scents, and they feel sooooo good...moisturizer, lip balm, extra soft tissue, soft nail file, extra soft toothbrush, moisture rich soap, and lots of baby wipes...be comfortable

**Playing cards...**help to pass the time and a good way to spend hours with friends when you don't feel like talking...on occasion there might be an exchange of money, but you did not hear that from us

**Your own little creature-friend...**last but not least is a small, soft, travel-friendly creature just for you. Might sound silly but silly can be good. It can be comforting to know that this soft little lizard is very versatile...it can be held or squeezed, or it can just be there for a distraction... but it is always there with you, a room-mate. And your little companion is small enough to travel when you have to leave your room & venture to unknown places in the hospital.



This gift of approximately 17 items is presented to each new admission on the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit and Leukemia induction patients.

The gift is in keeping with the mission of the foundation. It is only one piece of our work, and we feel it is an important one.

## In Memory of Louis J. Flanagan

Will there ever be the right words to thank you for your generosity? When Michael's grandfather, Louis J. Flanagan, passed away on January 20, 2004, we were overwhelmed with the many thoughtful donations to the foundation in his memory. Our sincere thanks to:

Patrick and Gina Brannon  
James and Jeanne Leffers  
Stephen and Ann Seery  
Jeremiah and Denise St. Onge  
Katherine Healy  
Charles and Susan Rodriques  
Raymond and Patricia Steele  
Elizabeth Smith  
Philip and Eileen Griffin  
Hilda Mosher  
Swansea School Administrators  
Swansea Transportation/Bus & Van drivers

Michael and Celia Gauthier  
Carol, Todd and Chloe Treible  
Lucia Marcille and Family  
Jake and Joyce Costa  
Lorraine Proulx  
Susan and Gregory Cote  
Staff of Gardner School  
John and Kathryn Medeiros  
Priscilla Shuman  
Brian and Maureen Sullivan  
Carol and Bob Turner  
Randi Brouillard

South Oaks Social Club  
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George and Debbie Sadler  
Joseph and Maureen Bushell  
Alma and Fred Hurley  
Rita and Hugh Flanagan

**In Memory of Eileen Driscoll**  
Thank you to Philip and Eileen Griffin for their thoughtful donation.