

# THE MICHAEL H. FLANAGAN ★ FOUNDATION ★

Spring 2007

Volume Number 5

## OUR MISSION:

**THE MISSION OF THE MICHAEL H. FLANAGAN FOUNDATION IS TO COMFORT LEUKEMIA AND BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THE FOUNDATION'S GOAL IS TO ENHANCE THE PATIENTS' QUALITY OF LIFE.**



There are days when we all realize how blessed we are. The season of spring brings about a sense of hope and a breath of fresh air...flowers are blooming, days are longer, baseball season has begun. Yet it is a reality that many people have challenges put before them that are too difficult to bear. A recent grant request came to the foundation by way of an oncology social worker, as is often the case. The request demonstrates how quickly and immediately the effects of leukemia change one's life.

Four years ago, at the age of 18, this young woman was diagnosed with chronic leukemia (CML) and underwent transplant. In the spring of 2006, she relapsed and another bone marrow transplant became necessary. The patient was especially close to her mother and needed her during the acute phase of hospitalization. Her mother had used all of her sick time and vacation time caring for her daughter. When transplant became necessary, the mother prepared to take an unpaid leave of absence from work. The foundation provided a grant that enabled the mother to stay at the Neely House at NEMC during the weeks that she would need to be at the hospital with her daughter. This is one request, one patient, one family's struggle. Since 2002, we have distributed approximately 15 to 17 grants each year and made a difficult situation a little bit better. It is true when they say, "every little bit helps". During 2006, the Foundation kept up its ever-growing progress in providing comfort in a variety of forms. Thanks to our generous donors, here is a sample of what you have done:

- ❖ 79 patients received Comfort Bags. The ladies now received new turbans. (See article inside)
- ❖ A library of children's books about the loss of a loved one were purchased for the oncology floor at RIH. These will be available by way of the Comfort Cart and families needing them may take them home to keep.
- ❖ The patients on the oncology floor at RI Hospital now enjoy a new television on a rolling cart.
- ❖ The RI Hospital oncology floor now has a "Comfort Cart". When a patient's condition worsens, the staff provides the family with this gesture. The cart is stocked with appropriate music, a CD player, prayer and meditation resources, light snacks and beverages, a card from the staff and resources dealing with end of life issues, questions and concerns. The social workers have initiated and supported this project as they believe this service is invaluable during a very difficult time.
- ❖ Parking Passes were distributed to the oncology social workers at Tufts-NEMC. Often BMT patients return to Tufts-NEMC for a check up and require immediate readmission. Some patients have not planned for readmission and the idea of mounting parking fees add to the stress of their situation. We have received very positive feedback about a very small gesture.



COURAGE



INTEGRITY



FAITH

- ❖ The staff at Tufts-NEMC now have specially designed condolence cards. When patients spend 4-6 weeks on the unit or longer, a strong bond develops with all the caregivers. It is especially difficult for the staff when they lose a patient. These cards are kept on the unit and they provide the staff the opportunity to communicate with the family.
- ❖ DVD libraries have been regularly updated, as have the toys in the Family Room. We are pleased to say that the families that use the room have been so careful and considerate ...the fish are thriving and the high chair has been a great addition!
- ❖ Now family members can sleep comfortable in the room of their loved one who is a patient. The Foundation has purchased a movable sleeper chair for the BMT unit at Tufts-NEMC.
- ❖ Knitting nurses at Tufts-NEMC have been producing prayer shawls for the patients, to keep them warm and we are including knitters from St. Luke's Parish in Barrington to supply our Rhode Island and Miriam hospital patients with some of that warmth.

My brother Michael must be smiling. Each of you has done so much to help so many and all of our work continues to be done in his memory.

Thank you for your continued generosity and belief in the mission of Michael's Foundation.

Christine

*"The capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance."*

Pablo Casals



*This year's **Evening Under The Stars** was a beautiful night...and truly under the stars AND a full moon at the Mount Hope Farm in Bristol, RI. We raised over \$30,000 and some of this year's highlights included a Wild West Dinner, provided by Fine Catering By Russell Morin, boots and blue jean attire, (mixed in with a few cowboy hats!), the fabulous band The Return, and a lively silent auction. Week-ends at ski houses in Vermont and New Hampshire, a long week-end at a home on Nantucket, fishing charters, one of a kind, jewelry, limited edition artwork and signed Red Sox and Celtics memorabilia are some examples of the festive items. We were fortunate to have remarks by Dr. William Sikov from Miriam Hospital who happened to be one of Mike's doctors. Being that it was our fifth annual event, it was a wonderful opportunity to change locations and also share a special spot in Rhode Island that was new to many. We thank all who attended and hope you enjoyed the evening!*



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*wedding Bells and Thoughtfulness...*

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*Thank you for donations to the Foundation in lieu of favors...as close friends of Michael, your actions are full of kindness.*

## **MANY THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS.**

The Foundation is deeply grateful to our "Evening Under the Stars" sponsors whose generosity helps defray the costs of the evening. The monetary donations received are an integral part of the evening's success and we are truly thankful to those who have been so supportive!

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**Thank you to Glaceau Company and Melaughlin and Moran for their in-kind donations.** The Vitamin Water, Smart Water and Budweiser products were a great addition and much appreciated.



## **FOUNDATION NEWS...**



### **Turbans with a Personal Touch**

The MHFF Comfort Bags have a wonderful new addition. Originally each bag had a fleece Turtle Fur cap and we continue to include this item. The caps provide comfortable warmth and enable the patient to keep dry when fever related perspiration occurs. However, it came to our attention that female patients who receive the bag might need something more feminine and stylish. Shopping for turbans was an eye

opener, as they are costly and often seem to be too fancy. That was when Irene Lemieux stepped in.

Irene is a Somerset resident, wife, mother, grandmother and a senior citizen who is active in her family, church and community. Irene learned about the Foundation from her daughter Patricia Steele who, with her husband Raymond, has attended many of the benefits and has been a supporter since she learned about it through colleagues.

Irene has volunteered her time and talent. She created a pattern and is now sewing turbans for the ladies who receive the bags. The foundation is also providing turbans to the cancer centers at Miriam and Rhode Island Hospital. When navigating the expenses of cancer care, every little bit helps. These turbans are receiving rave reviews...some are dressy and colorful, some subdued and simple, some are simply warm and cozy. Our sincere appreciation to Irene for her generosity. We love having her as part of our team!

To learn more about obtaining a turban or two, contact our website.

### **Comfort Bag Junior**

**In December, we created our first Comfort Bag Junior. Since creating the signature bag in 2002, our work has primarily focused on serving the adult population, those 18 and older. In December we**

**learned of a pediatric case in a neighboring community. The story came to us through a friend. She is a supporter of the foundation and her son and Michael were good friends. She told us of a 9-year-old boy, recently diagnosed with leukemia. The community and the school responded to the many needs of this family, but the impact of the diagnosis is financially overwhelming. The MHFF board approved a grant for assistance and tailored a Comfort Bag to meet the needs of this young boy. Power Rangers, Legos, a transformer toy and age appropriate music added fun to the "useful" nature of the gift. It is difficult to hear of a child or adult with such a harsh diagnosis, but it is a gift to be able to respond and to make a difference. Your support and belief in our mission makes it all possible.**



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Our social workers from Rhode Island Hospital compiled this list of basic but important facts to highlight how immediately the diagnosis of leukemia changes lives.

1. People of all ages can be diagnosed with Leukemia; this disease is not exclusive to children
2. Once diagnosed with Acute Leukemia, patients are admitted to hospital for chemotherapy, usually lasting 1-2 months
3. Lengthy hospital admissions for patients can precipitate financial crisis creating stress for the patient and their family.
4. Patients and families face unique psychosocial challenges due to prolonged and multiple admissions. Often patients have feelings of isolation, loss of control and difficulty negotiating changing roles in family.
5. Family often benefit from support groups where they are able to identify with others sharing similar concerns.
6. Not all types of leukemia require hospital admissions and chemotherapy, or bone marrow transplants.
7. Providing patients and families opportunities to express emotional response to diagnosis and hospitalization can be helpful.
8. Children with a parent or grandparent diagnosed with Leukemia, benefit from age appropriate information and opportunities to talk about their feelings and worries. They need to feel that they are being included in the family



9. Open communication with one's health care team regarding treatment plan and side effects is important to decision making and sense of control
10. Bone Marrow Transplant is recommended for some types of Leukemia. Sometimes family can play an important role in the process bone marrow transplantation. Social Workers, Nurses, and Chaplains are important members of the health care team and play an essential role in providing support to patients and their families during their treatment journey and survivorship.

Diane Passantino MSW, LICSW

Susan Garland MSW, LICSW

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## **Michael's Corner ...Other Events and Happenings in His Memory**

### **A Little Human Interest ... A Basketball Tournament**

The First annual FLANAJAM raised over \$1,000 towards the Michael H. Flanagan Scholarship Fund At Joseph Case High School in Swansea, MA. The fundraiser was organized by classmate and friend, Tyler Borges and featured 11 teams playing 3 on 3 basketball. Along with the 11 teams, several sponsors contributed to the tournament including NESN president Sean McGrail's donation of 4 tickets behind the dugout for the winners. Tyler's wife, Jessica, and parents, Bruce and Becky Borges, worked hard to keep the players hydrated and the grill never stopped. It is truly inspiring to watch young men and women work hard because they believe in a cause. This year at Class Night, Tyler and many of Mike's friends who participated will present the scholarship. Tyler noted that next year's Flanajam may be a golf tournament. When interviewed by the local newspaper he remarked that, "Good people do good things for good people. And Mike Flanagan was one of the best."



**Close Ties** Last October, Michael's cousin Madison Healy, was participating in the annual **Light The Night Walk** in Boston. This is a national program to raise awareness and funds for cancer patients, specifically leukemia and lymphoma, and their families. As part of her community service program at Northeastern University, Madison was walking with a group of her classmates. Among the group next to her was a family with posters representing their family member and the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit at Tufts-New England Medical Center. By way of conversation Madison explained that she was walking in memory of her cousin. This family knew of the foundation, spent countless hours in the Family Room and their family member received a Comfort Bag. A small world.

This past year we provided over 79 Comfort Bags and distributed over 15 grants to Tufts-NEMC, Miriam and Rhode Island Hospital. The patients and families need us and we are proud to be able to support those in need.

This year we have planned a **CAMPAIGN FOR COMFORT** for the fall of 2007 and will return to our Evening Under the Stars in the fall of 2008.

**STAY TUNED FOR A  
“SAVE THE DATE IN 2008”!**

**[www.mikesfoundation.org](http://www.mikesfoundation.org)**

Our website is up and running...we hope it serves as an easy means of communication about the Foundation, upcoming events, and opportunities to be a volunteer. Currently we have a survey accessible on the **Home** page... please take a moment to send us your thoughts. Our Family Room video, created by Kirsten Davis is also available with music on the **News** page. Take a look!

**The Michael H. Flanagan Foundation  
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