

# A SYSTEM of SUPPORT

2011 VOLUME 1

## SUPPORT NOTES

by Meg Turner  
Cancer Support Counselor

I recently read a magazine that featured a national writing contest that asks folks to share their ideas on the meaning of love. It prompted me to reflect on the acts of love that I see demonstrated each and every day—in simple, yet heartfelt ways—unsolicited kindness, the gentle spirit of presence, listening without the need to fix, weeping with a loved one, the gift of forgiveness, shared joy/laughter and shared sorrow.

Some of the simple, yet heartfelt acts of love I have recently witnessed include:

- The friend who rushes to her friend's side to offer advice, books to read, suggestions on coping, but instead chooses to sit with her friend without saying a word never needing to fill the silence.
- The gentle act of forgiveness when it may have seemed too difficult and painful, only a short while earlier.

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Levine Cancer Institute

Uncompromising Excellence. Commitment to Care.

## BATTLING OVARIAN CANCER, MY PERSONAL CANCER JOURNEY.

by Erica E. Bell

On Nov. 18, 2010, at the age of 32, my life was changed forever. I went in for surgery to remove a possible dermoid cyst on my right ovary, as well as endometriosis, because of symptoms I was having. When I woke up in recovery I just knew something wasn't right. As my nurse and doctor wheeled me to my hospital room I asked my GYN how everything went at which she replied, "I will let you know once we get to your room." At that point I knew it wouldn't be good news. As I was wheeled into my hospital room my husband of only six months came in and sat next to me, then my doctor delivered us the bad news. Instead of finding a dermoid cyst and endometriosis, I had a tumor on both of my ovaries. The doctor

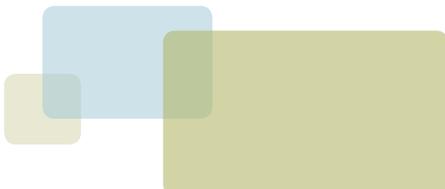
**"...what is next and how do I do this?"**

then continued to tell me she examined all of my organs and found that microscopic cells had spread to my peritoneum, bladder and omentum over my stomach. I was in complete shock. Then she said the dreaded words, "You have stage 3 Epithelial Ovarian Cancer, and you will need a hysterectomy." I was devastated.

As a newlywed, my husband and I wanted to start a family in the next couple of months. All of our dreams were gone in just three words... "you have cancer." The doctor was waiting for my reaction and all I could say was, "I had a feeling it would be cancer." The night before my surgery, I lightheartedly told my mother to not be shocked if it was cancer. I am not sure why I said this to her, but I must have had a gut feeling that it was more than what we thought. I felt the need to tell my mother this because she is a breast cancer survivor.

The following day, the pain from my laparotomy began and my family wondered why I still wasn't reacting to the diagnosis I was given. All I could say was I had plenty of time to cry but if I cried right now I would be in way too much pain, it was my way of blocking it out. As I recovered in the hospital I tried to figure out how to move forward with my life, what would happen next and how would I manage. At that moment, I decided that this cancer wasn't going to win, that I

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## SUPPORT NOTES

- Love is—the acceptance that he may not be able to keep his wife from suffering, but in a heartfelt act of gentle love, recognizes the value of listening and the depth of connection that comes in being able to hold one another tenderly and often.
- The couple who discover joy in the most unexpected places, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in their eyes.
- The friend who understands that under every “hard shell” is a person who is scared and vulnerable.
- The husband who understands that loving silence may have more power in healing and connecting than many well intended words.

During this time of transition, you may feel and hurt alone and may not see or feel acts of love. However, you picked up this newsletter, which is a beautiful act of self-love and care. The quiet force within you strengthens you. You are not alone in this time of change and challenge. *For free counseling and support at any time on your journey, call Meg at 704-355-7283.* You are a whole and vibrant being. Take care of all of you, now and always.

Meg Turner  
Cancer Support

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would fight and beat this awful disease. Once I got home, the research began. I scoured the internet for as much information as possible to educate myself on the disease that would consume my life. A lot of the information was heartbreaking. I found so many negative statistics that I became discouraged and stopped looking. Two weeks after my surgery, I met with my oncologist Dr. Hall at Levine Cancer Institute, who was a breath of fresh air. He made me feel confident; that I would be just fine and that I could beat this cancer. He told me to “live my life as normal” and from that day on, that is exactly what I tried to do. We made the decision to do the hysterectomy before starting my chemo. On Jan. 7, I lost my uterus and found out that I had stage 3A ovarian cancer. Dr. Hall told me I was considered late stage, but I’m lucky that only the cancer cells had spread and not tumors. At that moment, I knew that my life would be very different and I had to make the best of it. I started chemo on Jan. 31 and finished with my 6th cycle on May 23. I lost my hair, my energy and a bit of myself during those five months, but I became determined to find out who I am now and how I can help others in the fight against this silent killer. Following my first chemo, I decided to get tested for the BRCA 1 and 2 genes since my mother was a breast cancer survivor. Thankfully, I tested negative for both genes. Since my mother had breast cancer and I now have ovarian cancer, I still have to monitor my health. It is always better to catch something early instead of too late.

After my diagnosis, I joined the Ovarian Cancer Support Group also known as the “Teal Magnolias” at Levine Cancer Institute. This group has been a great support system for me. When I first joined they were planning the inaugural Stiletto Sprint in Charlotte to raise money for Ovarian Cancer Research. As the cause was near and dear to my heart, I immediately became involved. The event, held April 9 was a huge success! Raising over \$70,000 dollars toward research and far surpassed our goal of \$25,000. The event was filled with laughter and fun, even the doctors got involved and sprinted in their best dresses and stilettos to support the cause. The crowd is already looking forward to the next event in April 2012.

The diagnosis of ovarian cancer has been very hard for me. Not being able to have my own children is most devastating. However, I have decided to live my life as normal as possible and do as much as I can to advocate and educate others about ovarian cancer and its symptoms. I want to make sure doctors listen to their patients so they do not go undiagnosed as I did. The love and support of my husband, family and friends has helped me through my journey. I know I will have emotional days thinking of what I have lost due to ovarian cancer. I also realize how much I have gained, the new friends and a future of possibilities that lie ahead of me.

I think about my cancer, everyday and am aware of the battle I have to face. Today I am happy to report that I have finished my chemotherapy treatments and recently found out that I am in remission. I believe there are several challenges in life that mold you into the person you are meant to become; what you learned from each challenge you face determines how you decide to live your life. Live it to the fullest and truly enjoy each day you have. ■



SUPPORT

STRENGTH

## BUCKETS

It is important to have good sturdy buckets. It can be frustrating when a plastic pail splits, spilling its dirty contents onto the newly mopped floor. People who are confident in their work choose their tools carefully. Cindy, our cleaning lady, comes in the front door and lines up several cleaning buckets with various products and rags. Debbie always brings her own buckets when she does gardening work. Both of them get to work quickly and efficiently using those buckets to hold water, dirt or to collect items that need to be moved from one space to another. After watching them do this for several weeks, I decided that what I needed in my life was a good solid bucket like the one my Grandmother Grant had for “slopping the hogs” or milking the cows. Your choice of bucket material is symbolic of your ambitions or intent. If you have plastic buckets, it is not surprising that the outcomes can get dicey as the material deteriorates. A metal bucket says “look out world; I am serious about getting my job done.” Caring for the bucket is also important. You cannot leave water in the bucket during the winter, as it will freeze and cause leaks in the seams. You also have to be careful not to puncture the bottom or leave the bucket in the driveway where it is likely to get smashed. (My beloved galvanized watering can met this horrible fate. This is another story waiting to be told.)

Life is just better when you have the proper tools. It is difficult to clean house when your bucket has a slow leak. You cannot catch rain water to save for the upcoming drought if your bucket has holes in it. So when Jerry asked what I wanted for Mother’s Day (I knew better than to ask for another watering can since he swore that he would never buy another one), without hesitation, the answer was a good solid bucket.

I am so blessed to have all the advantages in fighting cancer. My bucket is filled with the love of my family and friends, hope and solid medical care. On my deck, Jerry lined up not one but four buckets of various sizes. I am one of the lucky ones because my bucket is filled with the proper tools to help get the job done. It’s the “sturdy bucket” that supports the journey to health and well-being both physically and emotionally.

I wish you a good sturdy bucket,  
Phyllis Zellmer

# Should I be eating only organic fruits and vegetables?

“Maybe, but not necessarily.”

by Dana Ingoglia, RD, CSO, LDN  
Oncology Dietitian



Research has not shown organic produce to be nutritionally superior to conventionally grown (non-organic) produce. There are no human studies that show organic foods are better than non-organic foods for reducing cancer risk, reducing the risk of cancer recurrence or reducing the risk of cancer progression. If the harm of the pesticides outweighed the benefits of the food, you would not see the consistent disease-protective effects of fruits and vegetables.

The term ‘certified organic’ by the USDA requires farmers to use only government-approved, plant-based chemicals; pesticides and herbicides are prohibited. Farmers must also use land that has been free of pesticides and herbicides for several years. The land must be open to inspection by USDA officials and may include testing of soil, water, and plant tissues to verify its certified organic status.

Worth noting, however is that organic foods may be exposed to chemicals carried in the wind or water. Whether eating organic

or non-organic produce, consumers should decrease pesticide residue by scrubbing fruits and vegetables with a fruit and vegetable rinse, removing outer leaves and choosing produce free of holes. Pesticides, waxes and chemicals used in crop production are designed to resist insects and rain which make these contaminants difficult to remove with water alone. All produce should be washed thoroughly, even types for which the outside rind or peel is not eaten, as a knife slicing through the item could introduce bacteria or other microbial contaminants onto the edible part. This is especially important if you are immune-suppressed. The key to selecting a good wash is to check the ingredient list. Don’t use chemicals to clean chemicals. The cleverly named ‘Fruit and Vegetable Wash’ by Environné, is an excellent fruit and vegetable wash.

Environmental Working Group (EWG), a consumer-based group based in Washington DC analyzed FDA pesticide inspection records from 1992 and 1993 to rate 42 fruit and vegetables. They found the 12 most

contaminated fruits and vegetables to be: strawberries, bell peppers, spinach, U.S. cherries, peaches, Mexican cantaloupe, celery, apples, apricots, green beans, Chilean grapes and cucumbers. The website ([www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)) includes a guide to pesticides. It lists produce that contain fewer pesticides but comparable amounts of nutrients. For example, strawberries have a high concentration of pesticides, so consider buying organic or substituting non-organic raspberries or blueberries which provide similar nutrients with much less contamination.

Whether you choose to consume only organic fruits and vegetables is ultimately a personal decision. Organic produce is more expensive and can be a deterrent to consume the recommended five to nine servings per day. A great alternative may be to buy local produce from farmers you know and trust. Consider checking out a local farmer that participates in community supported agriculture at [www.knowyourfarms.com](http://www.knowyourfarms.com) ■



Photo provided courtesy of: [www.elanaspantry.com](http://www.elanaspantry.com)

Recipe provided courtesy of: *The American Cancer Society's Healthy Eating Cookbook, 3rd edition, 2005.*

## Apple and Cranberry Acorn Squash

### Ingredients:

4 small acorn squash  
2 medium apples, unpeeled, chopped  
½ cup fresh cranberries  
¼ cup light brown sugar, packed  
2 tablespoons almonds, chopped  
1 tablespoon fresh orange juice  
1 tablespoon corn oil margarine, melted

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.  
Cut squash lengthwise into halves and discard seed.  
Arrange squash cut side down in a baking dish and add ½-inch water.  
Bake for 40 minutes.

Combine apples, cranberries, brown sugar, almonds, orange juice and margarine in a bowl and mix well.

Turn squash cut side up and spoon apple mixture into squash cavities.  
Bake for 30 minutes.

### Makes 8 servings

Approx. per serving: 129 calories; 3 grams of fat.



# PEOPLE YOU SHOULD KNOW



**MICHAEL KELLEN**

Hello, my name is Michael Kellen. I am the Service Support Coordinator at Blumenthal Cancer Center. I have worked at Carolinas Medical Center for 15 years in various capacities.

My primary function is to find patients access to state and county funded assistance programs. These programs include: available grants, Sliding Scale Fee and Medicaid/Medicare for the disabled. I also assist patients with billing issues.

If you would like to meet with me, please let your doctor or nurse know and they can direct you to my office. I can also be reached at 704-355-3757.

Michael Kellen  
*Service Support Coordinator*  
Blumenthal Cancer Center  
michael.kellen@carolinashealthcare.org



**MELLISA WHEELER**

Having cancer is hard enough, but finding help shouldn't be. Hello, my name is Mellisa Wheeler and I am the American Cancer Society Patient Resource Navigator at Blumenthal Cancer Center.

As your Patient Resource Navigator, I am available to help you find easy to understand information make decisions about your healthcare, to aid you in identifying resources both locally and nationally to meet your day-to-day concerns, and to promote your emotional well-being by connecting you with others who have been there. Insurance issues, difficulty obtaining medications, handling financial stressors, finding out-of-town accommodations, locating transportation resources and assisting with completing applications for assistance are just a few of the many services available to you and your caregivers.

I am available as often needed throughout your journey to assist with questions and concerns. Sometimes, you simply don't know who to call to ask for help. I am available at 704-355-1393 or via e-mail at [mellisa.wheeler@carolinashealthcare.org](mailto:mellisa.wheeler@carolinashealthcare.org). If I don't have the answer, I will help you find someone who does.

I look forward assisting you as your Patient Resource Navigator.

Mellisa Wheeler, LSWA  
*Patient Resource Navigator*  
American Cancer Society at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)  
*"Join the Movement for More Birthdays"*

COURAGE

# SUPPORT GROUPS, PROGRAMS AND COUNSELING SERVICES

## BREAST RECONSTRUCTION FORUM

A place for education and support

**Location:** CMC Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery  
1025 Morehead Medical Plaza, Suite 300  
Charlotte, NC 28204

**Meets:** First Thursday of each month

**Time:** 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

**Contact:** Chistin Harrison, 704-446-6810

## CAROLINA BREAST FRIENDS

Carolina breast friends' mission is to create a positive environment for women with breast cancer by providing education, encouragement and friendship.

**Location:** 1607 E. Morehead St., Charlotte, NC 28207  
Call 704-942-8202

**Meets:** Second Tuesday of each month

**Time:** 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**Contact:** Meg Turner, 704-355-7283  
meg.turner@carolinashealthcare.org

## CAROLINAS CANCER WELLNESS PROGRAM

Carolinas Cancer Wellness Program (CCWP) is an 8-week program designed to assist in managing the physical side effects of cancer treatment for survivors during treatment or recovery phases. Participants will receive an individualized exercise program consisting of cardiovascular, strength training and flexibility exercises, offering a comprehensive approach to recovery and increased physical stamina.

CCWP cultivates a community environment that will allow participants to meet others going through the treatment or recovery process.

Funded by 24 Hours Of Booty, Carolinas Cancer Wellness Program is located on the sixth floor of the dowl YMCA at 400 E. Morehead st.

For more information, please call 704-716-6150.

## HISPANIC BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP– ¡EN ESPAÑOL!

A new support group targeted to meet the needs of hispanic women with breast cancer.

**Location:** Morehead Medical Plaza  
Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Meets:** Second Monday of each month

**Time:** 5 – 6:30 p.m.

**Contact:** Magbis Love, 704-446-1548

## KIDNEY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

**Location:** Morehead Medical Plaza  
Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Meets:** Fourth Monday of each month

**Time:** 2 – 3:30 pm

**Contact:** Meg Turner, 704-355-7283  
meg.turner@carolinashealthcare.org

## LIVING WITH CANCER

A support group for any person with cancer.

Friends and family are also invited to attend.

**Location:** Morehead Medical Plaza  
Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Meets:** Second and fourth Tuesday of each month

**Time:** 7 – 9 p.m.

**Contact:** Meg Turner, 704-355-7283  
meg.turner@carolinashealthcare.org

## LOOK GOOD... FEEL BETTER

The look good... feel better program is free and open to any women undergoing Treatment for cancer. During these sessions, Trained cosmetologists use makeup, wigs and scarves to help women cope and adjust to the side effects of treatment (hair loss and changes to skin complexion). Each participant receives a bag of complimentary makeup provided by the cosmetologists. This program is provided in conjunction with the american cancer society. You must call to reserve a space.

**Location:** Morehead Medical Plaza  
Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Meets:** **Mondays, 3-5 p.m.**

January 16, 2012

February 20, 2012

March 19, 2012

May 21, 2012

July 16, 2012

September 17, 2012

**Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

April 17, 2012

June 19, 2012

August 21, 2012

October 16, 2012

**Contact:** Meg Turner, 704-355-7283  
meg.turner@carolinashealthcare.org

## NUTRITION CLASS FOR WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER

A nutrition class designed specifically for women with breast cancer. Learn more about what you should be eating and clear up common misconceptions.

**Location:** Morehead Medical Plaza  
Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Meets:** Third Wednesday of each month

**Time:** 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

**Contact:** Rachel Burns, 704-446-5171  
Dana Ingoglia, 704-355-3467

## OVARIAN CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

**Location:** Morehead Medical Plaza  
Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Meets:** First Wednesday of each month

**Time:** 1 – 3 p.m.

**Contact:** Meg Turner, 704-355-7283  
meg.turner@carolinashealthcare.org

“ Just when the  
caterpillar thought the  
world had ended,  
it became a butterfly. ”

-Unknown

## SAVE THE DATE

### 2012 Stiletto Sprint

Benefiting the Carolinas Ovarian Cancer  
Research Fund at Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Location:** SouthPark Mall

**Date:** Saturday, April 28, 2012

*For questions, please call Carolinas HealthCare  
Foundation at 704-355-4048*

*For more information on Carolinas Medical Center-  
Union's cancer support groups please contact Donna  
Little, Nurse Navigator at 704-283-3265*

## SUPPORTIVE COUNSELING

Free individual and family counseling is  
available through Blumenthal Cancer Center

**Contact:** Meg Turner, 704-355-7283  
meg.turner@carolinashealthcare.org



HOPE

OPENING  
SUMMER 2012

Levine Cancer Institute is changing the course of cancer care by removing the barriers that separate patients from access to world-class research and breakthrough treatments. The Institute's mission will take cancer care to a new level in the Carolinas, providing:

- Convenient access to quality cancer care
- Easier participation in clinical trials evaluating the latest cancer care treatments and approaches
- New and advanced cancer programs, state-of-the-art equipment and treatment protocols
- Recruitment of nationally recognized cancer care experts
- Patient Navigators who provide support and guidance through every step of cancer detection, treatment and healing process

Levine Cancer Institute will strive to be recognized by cancer patients, their families, referring physicians and the communities served by Carolinas HealthCare System as the first choice provider for cancer care.

“Cancer treatment is like a roller coaster, but my patient navigator made the journey much smoother. From scheduling appointments and helping me with paperwork, to emotionally supporting me during some tough moments, she was there every step of the way.”

– Stephanie Auten, breast cancer survivor

For more information on Levine Cancer Institute:  
visit [www.levinecancerinstitute.org](http://www.levinecancerinstitute.org) call 704-355-2884



Levine Cancer Institute

*Uncompromising Excellence. Commitment to Care.*

[www.levinecancerinstitute.org](http://www.levinecancerinstitute.org)