

Embarking on a Strategic Planning Process

This year the Cancer Foundation's Board of Trustees and staff are excited to take an important step in shaping the future of the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara by "building a strategic planning process" that provides us with an easy-to-implement and dynamic plan that we can build on annually.

Working with Mission Met, this process will allow us to reflect on where we've been, set bold goals for the future and identify new opportunities to better support our mission of ensuring superior cancer care for everyone in Santa Barbara County.

While developing a strategic plan has been on our radar for some time, now feels like the right time to start this project due to the changing medical landscape in our community. We're excited for this new beginning and look forward to communicating our progress as we map out the road ahead.

As always, thank you for your support,



Lori Willis

Lori Willis
Executive Director



Cancer Foundation and Organic Soup Kitchen Work Together to Support Local Cancer Patients

For the first time, the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Organic Soup Kitchen in support of efforts to improve the health and well-being of cancer patients in Santa Barbara County.

Since 2009, the Organic Soup Kitchen has prepared and delivered nutrient-dense, complete, and balanced meals, known as SoupMeals, to vulnerable residents, primarily cancer patients and individuals with chronic illnesses.

Approximately 50-60% of the clients served by Organic Soup Kitchen have a cancer diagnosis, many of whom are referred to them by Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. Depending on their needs, these clients receive between 1 to 8 containers weekly of the plant-based "SoupMeal of the Week."

"Nutrition plays a vital role in cancer treatment and recovery. Organizations like the Organic Soup Kitchen are essential for our community's health," says Lori Willis, Executive Director of the Cancer Foundation. "We are proud to support their efforts in delivering necessary nutrition and care to cancer patients throughout Santa Barbara County."

16,302

PATIENT
ENCOUNTERS IN

2024



JUDY BOUCHET

Patient Navigation Program

Judy Bouchet had a chronic sore throat that lasted nearly one year before she was finally diagnosed with esophageal and pharyngeal cancers. The double diagnosis was devastating.

Judy had been suffering from a sore throat for about 10 months, visiting various doctors who conducted many tests before she finally met with Dr. Vincent DeRosa at Sansum Clinic, now part of Sutter Health. Dr. DeRosa performed an endoscopy confirming not just esophageal but also cancer of her pharynx. The cancers were unrelated and the diagnosis was serious.

“When something like this happens, your brain is scrambled, everything is new, and you are juggling a maze of appointments and treatments, while not feeling well.”

Judy met Dawn Elliott, her patient navigator, the same day that she met her oncologist. Patient navigation services start immediately at RTCC, ensuring that patients get connected one-on-one with personalized support on their journey through cancer treatment. Specially trained navigators assist patients with every step of care, answering questions, coordinating external appointments, making referrals, and communicating with doctors.

“While I have the support of my family, it would have been much more difficult without Dawn’s help,” remarked Judy. “You can only depend so much on your family because they too are going through a lot of emotions.”

“Dawn was like my team captain,” she said. “Dawn told me to reach out with any questions, big or small, and she always got right back to me. I never had to wait. It was so nice to have that go-between because sometimes you

don't want to bother the doctor. Her support provided tremendous comfort."

"Until I spoke with a woman who was receiving cancer care out of town, I had assumed this level of attention was the norm," said Judy.

"But my friend shared her situation and she was not getting anything remotely like this in Los Angeles. I am so grateful – I had no idea that patient navigation was available in Santa Barbara, and it gave me greater appreciation for the outstanding level of care we have right here at home."

"I had such a wonderful group of caregivers, operating as a team specifically for me," said Judy. "They met weekly to discuss my case and how they could improve my care. I find that phenomenal!"

"The doctors and staff took care of me like you wouldn't believe. They were on top of everything. Dr. DeRosa saved my life with his skill and compassion along with Dr. Cheng in radiation oncology and Dr. Gregg Newman in medical oncology."

Judy's cancer was inoperable so she was treated with two months of radiation and chemotherapy.

"I love to admit that I am now cancer-free and in remission," she said.

"I found the care that I received at Ridley-Tree Cancer Center phenomenal throughout my whole process. Words alone cannot express how grateful I am for everyone who participated in my care and I feel my ongoing recovery is in no small part due to the attention and skill of all the doctors and other competent professionals who worked together to save my life."

Patient navigation services are offered free of charge to all patients at the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center, thanks to funding provided by the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara.



**CANCER
FOUNDATION**
OF SANTA BARBARA

2025 Rancheros Visitadores Ride Supports Local Cancer Care

RIDE ON RANCHEROS

95TH ANNUAL RIDE ✨ **MAY 3**

Since 2012, the Rancheros Visitadores, based in the Santa Ynez Valley, have supported local cancer care through their annual ride. This year members have already raised \$150K, bringing their cumulative total to \$1,530,000. These funds directly impact patients by supporting programs at Ridley-Tree Cancer Center including patient navigation, which Judy utilized during her treatment. Additional services include: clinical research, wellness classes and programs, hereditary cancer risk counseling, oncology nutrition and social work. The 95th annual ride for the Rancheros Visitadores will be celebrated with a parade through the streets of Solvang to Mission Santa Inés for a blessing of the riders on May 3rd.

**RANCHEROS
RAISED**

MORE THAN

\$1.53M

SINCE 2013



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ARTHUR J. MEROVICK
ENDOWMENT FOR
PATIENT ASSISTANCE

\$4.7M

FUND VALUE
AS OF 12/31/24



Elaine & Edward

STEPANEK
LEGACY SOCIETY

Merovick Fund Update

Art Merovick has a deep connection to the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara. Over the years, the Cancer Center touched the lives of many close to him. He served as the Director of Development during the last 17 years of his professional career before eventually joining the Board in 2012. Upon his retirement, the Board of Trustees approved the creation of the Arthur J. Merovick Endowment for Patient Assistance. Since then, thanks to the generosity of Art's family and friends, the fund has grown to more than \$4.7M, providing several hundred thousand dollars annually to support charity care at Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. To further support this fund, Art and his wife Carolyn became members of the Elaine and Edward Stepanek Legacy Society by including the Cancer Foundation in their estate through a family living trust. They join other like-minded individuals committed to ensuring superior cancer care for the Santa Barbara community.

Please let us know if you've already included us in your estate, intend to, or would like to discuss the many options available which provide income or tax savings. Please contact Lori Willis at (805) 898-2187 or lwillis@cfsb.org.