

Cancer Institute Volunteer to Be Honored for Fundraising Project



Karen Saunders, Northeast Regional Cancer Institute President and Leo P. Vergnetti, Board of Ambassadors Chairperson

Leo Vergnetti of Scranton has been nominated and selected for the “Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser Award” at this year’s Philanthropy Day Awards, hosted by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) Northeastern Pennsylvania Chapter.

Mr. Vergnetti, along with several other award recipients in various categories, will be honored at a luncheon on November 21st, 2014 at the Woodlands Inn, Wilkes-Barre.

Mr. Vergnetti serves as chairperson for the Board of Ambassadors, a group of individuals and business leaders who come together to raise funds and awareness to fight cancer in the local

community through their support and promotion of a gala event. The event, called the Spirit of Hope Celebration, takes place in November each year. Money raised benefits the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute’s Patient Navigation program. This initiative helps low income individuals in northeast Pennsylvania access direct cancer related health-care services.

Mr. Vergnetti recently attended a breakfast held by the Philanthropy Day Committee at The Colonnade in Scranton. The breakfast provided an opportunity for the honorees to prepare for the November luncheon.

This year marks the second year in a row that the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute has been nominated and selected as the recipient of AFP’s “Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser Award.” This award honors an individual or family that demonstrates outstanding skills in coordinating and motivating groups of volunteers for fundraising projects for the benefit of charitable institutions.

Story of Survivorship- Rose Manbachi

In March of 2012, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Malignant Melanoma. I did not have the typical presentation of melanoma; my foot was swollen and I sought medical care. Soon after, I went for an ultrasound which revealed enlarged lymph nodes. Subsequent biopsies revealed metastatic melanoma.

This all came as a surprise to me because I was well-educated about the dangers of the sun. I regularly applied sunscreen and never used a tanning bed. I performed regular skin checks and was looked over several times by a dermatologist due to a family history of skin cancer

Following my diagnosis, I went to Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute, where I got all of my treatments and continue to receive close follow-up. I had surgery in April of 2012 to remove 17 lymph nodes and then received aggressive chemotherapy. Unfortunately, the cancer returned after only 8 weeks. I was then placed on a clinical trial, where I received immune medications three times a day and had to be admitted to the hospital for these treatments. I was then sent home and put on oral medications for another 4 weeks. But, it didn't stop there. In October 2012, PET scans revealed my cancer continued to spread. I was not responding to the treatments.

The next approach was an IV immune medication, along with an additional oral medication, since the tumors were now seen in my bones. At the same time, I was given radiation treatments. I stayed at the Hope Lodge in Hershey since I had to be there on a daily basis for one month. My husband and I spent New Year's 2013 at the lodge, where we met many other cancer patients and their families.

Finally, after almost one year of not responding to treatments, my PET scan in February of 2013 showed no evidence of cancer. Following that PET scan, I remained on oral medications for one year. In December of 2013, it was determined by my doctors that I was in remission and I was taken off all cancer medications. I am now checked every 3 months by my oncologist and dermatologist. After 2 years of being disease free, my checkups will be extended to every 6 months.

Prior to being diagnosed with cancer, I was a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner for 31 years. I currently live in Wyoming, PA with my husband Abby. We have one daughter, Katie, who is enrolled in a PhD program at Yale University. I also have a large extended family, 3 sisters and 2 brothers who have been very supportive of me throughout my cancer journey.

When first diagnosed with cancer I was overwhelmed and anxious. I was fearful that I would not respond to treatment and concerned that my time with my family would be cut short. Despite all these feelings, after the initial shock, I was determined to remain positive and stay strong so I could fight this uphill battle.

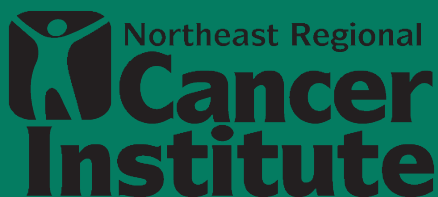
The key to overcoming this disease for me was having a committed team of health care professionals who specialized in melanoma and persisted even when I was not responding to treatments. I also feel strongly about being an advocate for yourself and staying educated about the specific type of cancer you have and the treatment options that are available. I also think it is important to tell your story. You never know when it will encourage or help others who have been diagnosed with this disease. We gain strength from each other.



**Rose Manbachi: Cancer Survivor
Survivors Celebration 2014 at
Kirby Park**

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