This newsletter accompanies our annual appeal, because we know this is the time of year many of you consider making -- or renewing -- donations to favorite charities.

Over the past five years, we have learned that donors like to see some kind of independent assessment of the charities they support.

For this reason, we are reproducing recent articles about Fighting Chance from three local newspapers. Each, I’m proud to say, paints a picture of an organization that is both highly professional and warmly embraced by the community it serves.

**From the Chairman**

"People find us very welcoming, very comforting.”
- Patient Navigator Heather Matthews

**Giving a Fighting Chance**

**By Carissa Katz**

When Duncan Darrow founded Fighting Chance five years ago, his goal was to help people with cancer navigate the confusing mass of information they faced after a diagnosis. Since then, Fighting Chance has matured into an organization that not only explains the resources available to people with cancer, but is itself a resource.

With a staff of three and new, larger offices that opened earlier this year on Hampton Road in Sag Harbor, Fighting Chance is able to offer people with cancer and their families some of the services it felt were missing elsewhere, including professional counseling. With more space, it can also accommodate support group meetings, a lending library of cancer literature, and a room where individuals, couples, or families can watch DVDs about the diseases they are dealing with.

“People find it very welcoming, very comforting,” said Heather Matthews, the group’s cancer information specialist. “We can hold families now; before, a couple would come in and one would have to leave.”

Fighting Chance will give tours of its offices, at 112 Hampton Street, after a benefit ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday at 3 p.m. Visitors will be welcomed with cocktails and hors d’oeuvres. Tickets are $50, or $250 for benefactors.

Fighting Chance started out as a sort of clearinghouse for cancer-related information. Its first major effort was to compile a booklet it called “Coping With Cancer on the East End: A Practical Resource Guide.” Packed with frequently asked questions and answers, names and phone numbers, and advice, it was “the yellow pages for all of the cancer care resources relevant to people on the East End,” Mr. Darrow said. Having been through his mother’s cancer diagnosis and treatment, Mr. Darrow knew how difficult it could be to track down pertinent information in the midst of all the tests and visits to the doctor. The latest edition should be out this week.

The booklet was meant to make the battle a little easier. Gathering the information also helped Fighting Chance see the gaps in the cancer care system. Bit by bit, Fighting Chance expanded its scope in an attempt to fill some of those gaps. Its first year, it hired Jessica Berlin as its director of Internet outreach. Ms. Berlin, who earned her master’s in social work from Columbia University, introduced e-counseling to Fighting Chance’s Web site, www.fightingchance.org, “That led to an explosion of our Web site,” Mr. Darrow said. “We routinely get, per month, 5,000 visitors.”

Ms. Berlin answers e-mails from local visitors to the Web site and refers others to appropriate resources in their communities.

In 2005, the organization hired Karrie Zampini Robinson, an oncology social worker who had been at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center for 16 years. Finding her, Mr. Darrow said, “was really a miracle.”

Ms. Robinson’s experience allowed Fighting Chance to begin offering professional one-on-one and group counseling to people with cancer. “It was the first Fighting Chance program of our own to fill a gap,” Mr. Darrow said. Ms. Robinson is available for counseling four days a week. She has set up support groups at Southampton Hospital and now can do the same at Fighting Chance’s larger offices on Hampton Street.

The same year, the group began searching for a full-time secretary, but found much more than that in Ms. Matthews. She had also worked at Sloan-Kettering and had staffed the East Coast phone bank for the National Cancer Institute for two years.

In addition to the counseling and resource services Fighting Chance provides at its offices, the organization also sponsors an annual symposium on cancer called “A Day of Hope.” The third symposium is planned for this fall.

“We’ve learned a Fighting Chance way of treatment,” Mr. Darrow said. “Your day at Fighting Chance now is almost like a spa experience. You come in and tell us what type of cancer you have and we’ll show you a tape on a 32-inch TV. You can watch it in a room alone or with family or friends. That gives you a basic understanding of your disease. Then you spend an hour with Karrie. People can get help dealing with their insurance companies and, if they cannot afford medications, are given the “compassionate care” numbers at pharmaceutical companies.”

“People are pretty scared when they come in here, so we try to make them feel warm and welcomed,” Ms. Matthews said last week. “People use us at different stages in their illness. It depends on the person and what they need. We just try to make ourselves available.”

“The charge for all of that is zero dollars,” Mr. Darrow said.
Physician at Memorial Sloan-Kettering joins Board of Fighting Chance

Dr. Bach is a pulmonologist/intensivist with expertise in quality of care and epide-miologic research methods. He has conducted research on racial disparities in the treatment and outcome of lung cancer patients, on the relationship between hospital volume and survival for lung-cancer surgery, and has participated in evidence-based guideline development for the care of lung cancer and COPD.
Fifth Anniversary of Fighting Chance and the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of the new offices at 112 Hampton Street in Sag Harbor.
When the diagnosis is cancer

Most people are on unfamiliar terrain when diagnosed with cancer. Part of the initial challenge for the patient and family is to become familiar with a new language and begin to get a greater sense of control over healthcare needs.

At diagnosis, the following questions will help the patient and family begin to take control:

1. What type of cancer do I have?
2. What stage or grade is my cancer and what does this mean regarding the course of my illness?
3. What are my surgery and/or treatment options?
4. What do you recommend and why?
5. Should I be considering other treatment options?
6. Are there side effects from the treatment?
7. What about recovery after surgery and treatment?
8. Are there long-term or late effects from treatment?
9. Is follow-up care necessary following surgery or treatment?
10. Are there clinical trials that are appropriate for me?

Being able to make informed and educated decisions about the course of medical care is the beginning of the cancer patient’s journey. Asking knowledgeable questions allows the doctor to further elaborate and explain about the course of illness and treatment. To familiarize oneself with this new environment is the beginning of empowerment and feeling in control.

This information is adapted from the website of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, PLWC guide.

Karrie Zampini Robinson, LCSW
Director of Clinical Programs, Fighting Chance

Cancer Patient Transportation Services
- To be sure you get to the doctor on time -

Lack of transportation can become an emergency issue for cancer patients who can’t afford to miss potentially life-saving therapy sessions.

Breast cancer patients, for example, can require 30 consecutive days (excluding weekends) of radiation treatments. For some on the East End of Long Island, the nearest radiation oncologist is 50 miles away. Round-trip, that’s 100 miles of driving.

But some days you could be too ill or fatigued to drive yourself to the doctor -- and your friends may all be working. Or, say your only car breaks down. How are you going to get to the doctor on time?

Now there is a simple answer: just call Fighting Chance at 631.725.4646. Thanks to the generosity of one of the leading car services in the Hamptons, their cars can now take our patients to emergency doctor appointments - using their reliable professional drivers. And like everything we do at Fighting Chance, the service is free of charge.

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