Your Gifts Provide Hope to Cancer Patients

When you’re 25, cancer is the last thing on your mind. Brittany Plumb was active, motivated and lived a healthy lifestyle. But she started to notice some nagging fatigue and shortness of breath. When it just wouldn’t go away, she went to the Metro Health Emergency Department. She knew something wasn’t right, but she never imagined what was actually wrong.

An MRI revealed a large mass in her chest. Brittany was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkin’s lymphoma. The thought that never entered her mind before was now front and center in her thoughts. Cancer was now her reality.

Her fight to survive began immediately. Her treatment plan was all-encompassing: chemotherapy, radiation, and more prescription medications than she had ever seen in one place. Appointments to track, decisions to make, side effects to manage, and multiple specialists to see—life was suddenly complicated. Brittany was overwhelmed. But amidst the turmoil of a life-changing diagnosis, medical treatment and monitoring, she found a calm center. Her name was Rita Rivard, RN, and she is a Patient Navigator at the Cancer Center at Metro Health. Rita was there at Brittany’s first day of chemo and at every appointment that followed for the next year. Her job was to make sense of Brittany’s treatment plan, bring order to her schedule, and help her manage the many facets of her care.

“My role was to walk her through her journey. To lead her to resources and help her understand what was going on physically,” said Rita. “But I was also there to support her emotionally.”
That was a support Brittany didn’t even realize she needed at first. Her treatment schedule eventually became routine. She showed up where and when she was supposed to, almost on autopilot. But one day when she came for a scheduled treatment, Rita caught her by the arm and pulled her aside.

“She just asked me, ‘Hey, how are you doing?’ and I broke down,” Brittany recalls. “That was really the first time I allowed myself to acknowledge that everything is not okay. Rita helped me take the time to focus on me…not just my disease or the medicine.”

As Brittany fought for her own life, she was dealt another huge blow when her father passed away unexpectedly. She learned of his death on her way to Metro Heath for a session of chemo.

“That day, Rita was there, and we just talked like we were friends,” said Brittany. “She didn’t know my dad, but she listened and she even teared up a little. I could tell she wasn’t just there to do a job. Her heart was really in it.”

For Brittany, that made all the difference. Having someone who truly understood the cancer battle. Having someone who willingly shared the pain of her personal loss. Someone who listened without trying to fix anything. Without trying to offer a solution. Without trying to take away her pain. It was an element of healing she hadn’t realized she would need.

“I look back now and see how important Rita was to me during that time. Having someone to care for my emotional well-being was just as important to my survival as having those who cared for my medical well-being…if not more.”

In the span of less than a year, Brittany’s life was changed forever. While cancer and loss altered how she would experience each day, they could not defeat her spirit. Today, she is cancer free. And she smiles and laughs with new appreciation…and without fear for her future.

**Donors like you helped save Brittany’s life. If you would like to help other cancer patients in need, please contact the Foundation at (616) 252-5000.**

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**Side Notes**

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Signs of summer are all around us: people milling about the Farm Market, runners preparing for the Metro Way 5K, kids training in Metro’s sports clinic.

We are excited to offer so many opportunities to support active and healthy lifestyles in our community. If you get a chance, stop by…support local farmers, walk or run the 5K, participate in a free health screening. There are lots of things to do!

Thank you for all the ways you continue to be involved with and show your support of the Foundation. Together, we are making West Michigan a happier, healthier place to live!

Yours for health and wellness,

Laura Staskiewicz
Chief Development Officer

It’s a dream every father has for the little girl in his life—giving his daughter’s hand in marriage. For Tom, father of seven, it seemed a dream that may not come true with his youngest daughter Sarah.

Years before Sarah would get married, Tom underwent surgery to have a tumor on his spine removed. There were serious complications. A spinal cord stroke left him paralyzed and unable to breathe on his own. That was twelve years ago.

After intensive rehabilitation, Tom was able to breathe on his own, and he went home for a few years. But seven years ago his condition deteriorated. Almost every day since, a ventilator has taken every breath for Tom and a wheelchair has rolled in place of every step.

Tom is fully dependent on his caregivers at the Metro Health Assisted Breathing Center (ABC) for all of his medical care. But also for so much more. He depends on the ABC for his very quality of life.

Tom cannot leave his hospital room without someone’s help. He can’t go see one of his 27 grandchildren perform in a school play. And he certainly can’t travel to his daughter’s wedding. Not on his own.

So being at his daughter’s side as she walked down the aisle could have been a lost dream—but for a bus. A state-of-the-art medical transport bus, funded by Metro Health Hospital Foundation donors.

Fully-equipped to handle all of his medical needs and to accommodate his oversized wheelchair and bulky medical equipment, the Metro’s ABC bus was Tom’s ride to a dream come true.

“He was happy to be there to perform his duty as a father,” said Wilma, Tom’s wife of almost 45 years. “Without the bus, that would not have happened.”

“It was such a gift to have my father at my wedding. To walk next to his wheelchair with my hand on his arm, to hug him at the altar…that was amazing,” his daughter Sarah reminisces.

While he’s bound to his wheelchair and a ventilator, his spirit is not bound to a hospital room. And thanks to the ABC bus, neither is he. He is free to experience the joys of life—the things that matter most—his family.
Thanks to your tremendous support, Hope and Healing was a success. It’s because of YOU that Metro Health will be able to provide patients the compassionate care and support they deserve.

We are thrilled to report that with the generosity of attendees, sponsors and a matching gift, we were able to raise nearly $80,000. Funds raised will directly impact the lives of local patients in meaningful ways.

Thanks to your generosity…

- You’ve helped ensure children have the toys and education materials that provide comfort and knowledge for our littlest patients through Metro Health’s Child Life department.
- You have helped offer hope to Assisted Breathing Center patients as they experience life outside the hospital on special group outings.
- You have provided life-saving emotional support services for cancer patients who have lost their way.

THANK YOU to our sponsors

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Doctors’ Day Gifts

Our thanks to the following donors for making a gift in honor and appreciation of a dedicated physician or health care provider in celebration of Doctors’ Day on March 30, 2014.

Gifts listed were given between March 1, 2014 and March 30, 2014.
Wellness for Women...Health for All

They run. They sponsor. They volunteer. They fundraise. They give. They collaborate. And they are always looking to do more. Women’s health is more than just a business for Michigan Obstetrics and Gynecology, P.C. (OB-GYN). It’s a commitment and a passion that they live out every day. And their number one chosen partner is the Metro Health Hospital Foundation.

From the moment they opened their doors nearly two decades ago, Michigan OB-GYN set out to make a difference in the health of our community. In doing so, they connected with the Foundation. The relationship has grown every year since. “Metro Health is such a natural match for us. At Michigan OB-GYN, our patients matter to us. We treat them like family,” said Monica Dusnik, Office Manager. “That is exactly how Metro cares for their patients. And the Foundation plays a huge role in facilitating that personal approach to care.”

While their active involvement in promoting women’s wellness programs may be inherent, their support also spreads to seemingly unrelated program areas. That’s because Michigan OB-GYN has a bigger vision—one that reaches far beyond their area of specialty. They don’t see their role in health care as isolated to one population. Rather, they view the health of a community as interconnected. And that is evidenced by their support of diverse programs...from breast cancer to child life and patient assistance to diabetes education.

In memory of Dr. James Corelli
Metro Health Hospital Medical Staff
In honor of Tim DeBard in ABC
Mr. and Mrs. Robert DeBard
In honor of Dr. DeLamere
Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd McClean
In honor of Michael Edwards
Pastor Jay K. Slechowe
In honor of Dr. Pedro Fener
Metro Health Hospital Medical Staff
In honor of Chuck Gailer
Ms. Roberta R. Geiser
In memory of Dr. Michael McCully
Mrs. Norma M. Zellinger
In honor of the birth of Evan Michael
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Zombrer
In honor of Dr. Quinn
Mr. and Mrs. Ted R. Conrad, Sr.
In honor of Dr. Gary N. Sackett
Mr. Thomas M. Yackish
In honor of Dr. John Woodworth
Ms. Elise Marie Davis
In memory of William Burton Sr.
Mrs. Carol Burton
In memory of Chris Clapper
Ruby Goldthorpe
In memory of Sturgill Cline
Anonymous
In memory of Dr. Jim Corelli
Mr. John B. Nichols
In memory of Lori Lynn Dean
Ms. Dorothy A. Dean
In memory of Mike Donovan
Anonymous
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Mrs. Louise M. Hospodarsky
In memory of Clarence A. Jones
Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Jones, Jr.
In memory of Elizabeth Klopisch
Mr. Donald L. Klopisch, Sr.
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Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sluzerman
In memory of H. Garad Nyaland
Beverly A. Nyaland
In memorial of Ralph Wals
Mr. and Ms. Stephen Holf
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Pontius
Mr. Jerry E. Sisson
Mr. Thomas C. VanderWuude
In memory of Sandy Zakem
Mr. Alex J. Defonser
These gifts are a celebration of life, health and hope. They are often used to commemorate a milestone such as a birthday, wedding, graduation or anniversary—or as a reminder of a deceased loved one. If you’re interested in making a memorial or tribute gift, please complete the enclosed envelope and mail with your check. The accuracy of this list is very important so please contact us at 616-252-5660 if you have been added.

Does your organization want to get involved with Metro Health Hospital Foundation? Learn more at metrohealth.net/foundation

Tribute Gifts
Our appreciation to the following donors for making tribute and memorial gifts between February 24, 2014 and May 21, 2014.

Michigan OB-GYN staff members participate in the Metro Way 5K. The partnership between Michigan OB-GYN and Metro Health Hospital Foundation supports the health of the entire community.

Metro Health Hospital Foundation

The following individuals and families have named Metro Health Hospital Foundation in their will or trust. Their foresight and thoughtful commitment to the future of health care at Metro Health is extremely appreciated and will be felt for generations to come.

Ray & Kathy Alder
Dr. Robert D. & Suzanne C. Bowman
Carol Burton
Bred & Tia Carender
Dr. William & Normie Cunningham
Dorothy Dean
Dr. Paul & Jennifer Deyer
Cynthia L. Fish
Charles & Marjorie Gentry
Scott & Kristi Halquist
Dag & Jennifer Hascall
Diole Hayes
Donald & Mary Lu Herzog
Donna Huln
Brian & Tamara Japson
Dillye Johnson
Carol Karr & Kevin Briggs
Stephen J. Klotz
Dr. Paul & Kelli Kovack
Vis & Joan Krause
John & Barb Leegawler
Mark & Marcia Laws
Donald G. Marsh
Jeff & Alice Morel
Franklin P. Standle
Todd & Laura Staskiewicz
Warren & Sheryl Westbrook
Gerald & Beverly* Witten
Michael H. Zakem, DO
*indicates deceased members

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Within five days of opening up registration for this spring’s Keeping the Beat Heart Screen program, every registration spot was filled! 275 local high school students visited Metro Health Cascade to receive free heart screens and learn about the importance of heart health and AED use.

Heart screens are 100% funded by donor gifts. If you’d like to learn more about future heart screenings, like us on Facebook or sign up for our e-newsletter by visiting our website at www.metrohealth.net/foundation.

### Students Participate in Record-Breaking Heart Screen

### Save the Date! Upcoming Events

Looking for ways to give back and make a difference to patients and their families? Here are several events that will happen through the summer and fall.

**July 31 – Metro Way 5K**

This family-friendly event benefits Metro Health’s free and low-cost community health programs and screenings. Runners, walkers and children are encouraged to participate! Register online at http://metrohealth.net/5k. For sponsorship information, contact Michelle Harris at (616) 252-5007.

**September 20 – Feelin’ Grand**

Our annual fundraising gala held at DeVos Place in the Steelcase Ballroom. Individual tickets and corporate tables are available. Interested in sponsoring? Contact Melissa Wesolek at (616) 252-5006. Visit our website at www.metrohealth.net/foundation/events or contact the Foundation at (616) 252-5000 for more information.

**October 6 – Putt Par Pink**

Golfers and volunteers are invited to Putt Par Pink, a golf outing sponsored by Thousand Oaks Golf Club and benefitting our Pink Compassion program. This unique program provides financial assistance to breast cancer patients undergoing active treatment. For more information, contact the Foundation at (616) 252-5000.