



2018 Annual Report

Medical Education

Survivors Teaching Students[®] (STS) is our signature program. It was developed in the mid-1990s by Rhonda Oziel (for whom Rhonda's Club is named) to train ovarian cancer survivors to share their stories of diagnosis, treatment and survivorship, along with facts about the disease to medical health sciences students. Because of this program, healthcare providers have a greater understanding of risk factors and symptoms, leading to increased awareness and earlier diagnoses. STS is now taught in 35 states across the U.S., the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, UK, Canada, and Australia.

In the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area, Rhonda's Club carries on the STS tradition that Rhonda started. Organizing a speaker pool of 23 volunteers, we regularly teach students at three medical schools, two in Baltimore (Johns Hopkins, Medstar Franklin Square) and one in Washington (Georgetown). In 2017, we conducted 12 STS classes for 277 medical students (during their 3rd year training/hospital rotation in gynecologic studies) and in 2018, we are on target to maintain or surpass that performance with 10 classes attended by 200 students through October.

The impact of the STS program is perhaps best measured by the words of the students themselves. When asked how the class has changed the way they think about ovarian cancer, among their insightful comments were the following:

"It's given me the survivors' perspective and how important it is to try to catch the cancer early."

"Caring is important!; I will take even minor complaints more seriously because of this risk."

"Makes it more real and easier to remember when you have a story behind a diagnosis; physician vigilance is imperative."

"I always find it more impactful to learn from experience than from books."

We also meet with nursing students at a local hospital to discuss best nursing practices for gynecologic oncology nurses, including managing side effects of chemotherapy and how to talk to patients.

Assistance to Survivors

Rhonda's Club volunteers work with dozens of women with gynecologic cancers, offering support through all stages of treatment and survival. We organize a mentoring program that puts women in

touch with survivors to share experiences, services and advice throughout their medical journey. A volunteer has shared her experience as a mentor:

"We stay in touch regularly and she is very appreciative of my friendship and support. I check in with her on a regular basis to provide her whatever comfort and support I can offer. My life has certainly been enriched by Carolyn's presence and, according to her, she's been enriched as well."

Throughout the year, we meet informally with gynecologic cancer patients to provide a community of caring and to share information from medical conferences.

A major initiative has been the distribution of 250 free patient support bags to newly diagnosed women. These bags contain several comfort items (some of which are donated) and a resource guide that we have compiled with practical information on what to expect during treatment, frequently asked questions, a glossary of medical terms and other useful facts. This project has been very well received by patients as well as by overworked medical professionals in the offices through which we distribute the bags. One patient wrote:

"When I was diagnosed with Primary Peritoneal Cancer almost 6 years ago I received an enrichment of ovarian cancer information with a warm blanket to be used for my treatments. I especially found the personal delivery and visit by a Rhonda's Club member a very warm and loving welcome."

In another effort, Rhonda's Club underwrites small grants to financially needy women through the Washington Hospital Center Foundation. The Foundation screens and administers the grants on our behalf through their medical social workers who work directly with patients at the hospital. Last year with a small grant of \$2,500, we were able to help:

- a 66-year old African American woman who was distraught to learn that her Medicare A insurance would only pay for inpatient treatment for a pelvic mass. We provided partial payment so she could receive chemotherapy on an outpatient basis.
- a 62-year old El Salvadorian woman with ovarian cancer who lives alone received transportation assistance so she could make her daily treatment appointments; and
- a 78-year old woman who received a liquid supplement to reverse her nutritional decline during chemotherapy.

The Washington Hospital Center Foundation reported to Rhonda's Club that:

"Your gift has ensured our patients in financial need, undergoing ovarian and gynecologic cancer treatment, are provided with the best possible care and support services to help ease their mind of financial burden during their time of need."

Public Awareness and Outreach

Rhonda's Club participates in health fairs and conferences throughout the year and maintains a social media presence to raise public awareness of symptoms, risk factors, and treatment protocols for gynecologic cancers. This work includes:

- Distributing educational fliers in doctors' offices;
- Delivering gynecologic cancer materials to a targeted group of 51 clinics in medically underserved neighborhoods;
- Posting health awareness notices on Facebook;
- Maintaining a website; and
- Attending medical conferences to promote our activities.

Research

Rhonda's Club promotes and directly supports research into improving the quality of life of gynecologic cancer survivors and ultimately finding the cures for these diseases. To this end, three Rhonda's Club volunteers currently serve as consumer advocates, alongside medical scientists and clinicians to establish priorities on research review boards sponsored by the federal government that fund innovative and cutting-edge cancer research. One consumer reviewer described her experience as follows:

"I was a full voting member, along with prominent scientists, at meetings to help determine how the \$20 million appropriated by Congress for Fiscal Year 2018 will be spent on future research dedicated to ovarian cancer challenges and issues. Rhonda's Club representation provided an experienced voice to assist in the evaluation of cutting edge research and feedback to brilliant scientists as they seek to understand and someday eradicate this disease."

In addition, Rhonda's Club funded a \$12,500 grant in the 2017-2018 cycle with the Foundation for Women's Cancer to train a young oncologist in the field of uterine cancer. Rhonda's Club also joined in a national coalition, StandUp2Cancer, raising and contributing \$25,000 over four years for an Ovarian Cancer Dream Team that resulted in several biomedical break-throughs.

Fundraising

Rhonda's Club provides all our services free of charge. In addition to volunteer time and energy, we rely on individual donations and work to raise funds through public events. Fundraising helps us build community and spread gynecologic cancer awareness as well as financing our programs. Examples of our fundraising work include:

- an ovarian cancer awareness day at a local golf club with 72 golfers joining in to raise \$7,000; and
- a collaboration with three healthy foods cafes to donate a portion of one day's sales as Rhonda's Club volunteers greeted diners with educational materials.

Organization

Rhonda's Club is a non-profit, IRS Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization founded in 1997 by Rhonda Oziel and fellow ovarian cancer patients. The organization is managed by a Board of Directors, none of whom are compensated. Nine of the twelve board members are gynecologic cancer survivors. Those who are not are dedicated to our mission to honor a relative or close friend who has been diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer.

Respectfully submitted,
November, 2018

JoAnn Symons, chair
Kathryn Daniels
Clare Donelan, Treasurer
Pat Goldman, *founding member*
Meryl Goodman
Susan Kim
Mary Kinler
Karen Ribler
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