Cancer Support at Piedmont Athens Regional

At Piedmont Athens Regional, we treat the patient – not just the disease. Because cancer treatment involves more than medical care, free programs such as yoga, cooking demos, expressive art class, and counseling are available to anyone affected by cancer at any phase in his or her journey. The Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support at Piedmont Athens Regional, serves anyone regardless of whether or not they are a Piedmont patient.

For more information about the Loran Smith Center programs or to register for a class, please call 706.475.4900 or email loransmithcenter@piedmont.org.

This newsletter is made possible by the Thomas J. & Sara Cooney Endowment.
September is Prostate Cancer Awareness month!

Three years ago 67-year-old Mike Sandefer received a devastating cancer diagnosis. Since then, his determination and positive attitude have turned his cancer diagnosis into a journey that has helped others in his shoes through raising funds for Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center’s cancer support center.

It was during an annual examination that Sandefer first learned his prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels were abnormally high. His primary care physician sent him to a specialist for additional testing to determine the cause of these high levels.

“That’s when I got the news that I had prostate cancer,” Sandefer said. “As if this news alone wasn’t bad enough, my doctor told me that the cancer that had already spread to my bones.”

Sandefer immediately underwent robotic surgery to remove his cancerous prostate; however, he needed additional treatment, including radiation therapy, for the cancer that had metastasized to the bones from his hips down to his knees.

Treatment was painful; however, rather than focusing on the negatives of his cancer diagnosis, Sandefer said he decided that no matter what, he wanted to stay positive, fight and focus on finding support.

It was during one of his radiation treatments that he heard about the Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support at Piedmont Athens Regional.

“I heard about their support groups, specifically for men who were battling or survivors of prostate cancer,” Sandefer said. “I started attending those regularly. That’s when I also got into In Their Shoes.”

The prostate cancer support groups, one of the many free resources offered at the Loran Smith Center, gave Sandefer a sense of comfort. He enjoys learning from other men’s experiences, as well as talking with others who know how it feels to go through a cancer diagnosis.

Connecting with the Loran Smith Center, Sandefer also discovered a newfound passion in the annual In Their Shoes run/walk event, an annual race that honors cancer survivors and raises money for the center.

“Since my diagnosis, I’ve been avidly walking,” Sandefer said. “I walk around five miles every day. Before my bones grew weaker, I was sometimes walking more than seven miles a day.” Sandefer began his walking to keep his joints, muscles and bones in his legs strong.

When he heard about the Loran Smith Center’s annual walk/run, he knew he not only wanted to participate but also contribute to the cause.

He has now completed three In Their Shoes walks/runs, raising around $1,000 per event. He then donates these funds to the Loran Smith Center.

“The Loran Smith Center is filled with sincere, compassionate staff, and it’s nice to be able to give back to them for all they’ve helped me with,” Sandefer said.

Although Sandefer is still undergoing treatment for the cancer in his bones and his strength can worsen as time goes on, he doesn’t plan to stop staying positive, walking and raising funds for In Their Shoes.

“I’ve been through a lot of obstacles with this diagnosis, but we’re so fortunate to have this place in our community,” Sandefer said. “I would’ve had the same diagnosis had I lived elsewhere, but I’m surrounded by support thanks to the Loran Smith Center.”
Many things have changed since the Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support at Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center first opened its doors in 2000. However, two things have remained constant: Its mission to care for patients beyond typical treatment and the center’s team, including oncology social worker Lauren Liverman, who was there the day the hospital hosted its ribbon cutting event to celebrate the center’s opening.

“I’m so passionate about this line of work because of my family’s life experiences,” Liverman said. “I was young when my grandfather was diagnosed with cancer, so I’d spent a lot of time in and out of the hospital, seeing him be cared for at the bedside.”

As Liverman watched her grandfather battle cancer, she noticed how his cancer diagnosis and treatment process affected her family. Later in life, her uncle was also diagnosed with cancer, and that’s when she identified the ripple effect that the disease has on the fabric of a family.

“At the time, there wasn’t any sort of support center or system like the Loran Smith Center to help our family and my uncle’s caregivers,” Liverman said. When she came in to work at the center, however, she knew she had found her calling.

Though it was an exciting time, the Loran Smith Center’s opening also brought a new set of challenges for Liverman and the other small set of staff working there. For starters, the idea of oncology social work and providing integrative care was a fairly new concept.

“We knew that a strong support community was and still is crucial to the healing and recovery process, not just for cancer but for many disease processes,” Liverman said. “We wanted to be able to serve as a safe place for anyone to come with any issues they were facing with a cancer diagnosis – medical or not – so that we could provide the help that they needed.”

“The center brought something unique to the Athens-area community,” Liverman said. “We knew it was special, but it was a challenge getting others to see that.”

Because cancer treatment involves more than just medical care and there’s a lot of emotional stress behind it, the Loran Smith Center aims to be a resource for free services and programs, such as yoga, tai chi, nutrition classes, expressive art classes, complementary therapies (oncology massage, Healing Touch, and Reiki), and counseling for anyone affected by cancer at any phase in his or her journey (regardless of whether or not they are a patient of the hospital).

“We support the whole person, emotionally and mentally, and there’s no doubt that support in these areas has a positive effect on health outcomes,” Liverman said.

As the team worked on outreach, it not only found the number of patients growing, but also the number of staff members, volunteers and services provided grew.

“We put into place services that addressed the fears and concerns of a cancer diagnosis, helping patients and their loved ones understand their own thoughts and feelings when dealing with cancer,” Liverman said. “And with that, we’ve been able to empower many people over the years, helping them tackle the daunting effects of a cancer diagnosis and its treatment process.”

Now, the center’s calendar is constantly full of weekly and monthly offerings that provide these patients with the tools they need for support. Liverman said the team will always continue to develop and change their programs, as the needs of patients change, but she’s amazed by how her team is able to help its many patients in so many unique ways.

Welcome Alexia!

Infinita voluntad, infinite will, were the words my uncle lived by. He believed that as long as there were people in this world willing to be kind, humble, and of service to others then anything in this world could be achieved. Every memory I have of Erasmo Aguirre is one in which he’s offering help; whatever it was, he was always lending a hand, a smile, and his words filled with love. 7 years ago I lost my uncle to cancer, multiple myeloma to be specific. Since his passing I’ve tried to live by my uncle’s words and in doing so I have been able to learn a great deal about myself and others in similar situations.

My name is Alexia Ardón, for as long as I can remember I have worked in a variety of jobs – all of which allowed me to offer my help to those who needed it. In the future I hope I can continue to learn and use that knowledge to help many more. It is with great pride and joy that I join this wonderful team at the Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support.
Thank you to our donors!

To make a donation to the Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support and help continue to make these programs possible, go to piedmont.org/locations/piedmont-athens/foundation.

**LORAN SMITH CENTER FOR CANCER SUPPORT**
Jane Parks
Jasey Jones
Jennifer Wilburn
Marcia Millsap
Jeannine Collins

**MEDICATION ASSISTANCE FUND**
University Cancer & Blood Center

**IN THEIR SHOES**
Harriet Canfield

Connie Phelps accepts a check for $10,500.00 from Athens Area Cancer Auxiliary Leaders; Laura Bragg, Katie Reed and Casey Spell. Funds will support Piedmont Athens’ Breast Health Center and Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support.

Athens BMW Drive for a Cause test drive event raised $1,000.
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**CULTIVATING A RESILIENT SOUL RETREAT**

*Saturday, September 28, 2019*

8:30 a.m. – Registration and light breakfast • 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Program (includes lunch)

Class size is limited and reservations are required.

For more information about the LSCCS programs or to register for a class, please call **706.475.4900** or email loransmithcenter@piedmont.org.
This practice is part of an ancient Chinese method of preventive medicine. T’ai chi chih is a moving meditation that improves fitness of the mind and body. It is easy to learn and can be done by people of all ages and ability levels.

**T’AI CHI CHIH**
T’ai chi chih is a moving meditation that improves fitness of mind and body. It is easy to learn and can be done by people of all ages and ability levels. **Mondays**

**T’AI CHI @ OCONEE HEALTH CAMPUS**
This practice is part of an ancient Chinese method of preventive health care and exercise passed down over centuries, predating recorded history. T’ai Chi coordinates movement, breath and meditation to mobilize the inner resources of body and mind to create vitality and aid healing. Focusing on movement is the physical exercise and focusing on meditation and breath is the mind/brain exercise. **9/12 to 10/3**

**YOGA FOR HOPE, PEACE, AND CANCER RECOVERY**
Learn a combination of movements and poses, breathing techniques, and deep relaxation. Yoga can help reduce stress and anxiety, combat depression, improve sleep, and minimize side effects of treatment. **Thursdays**

**CULTIVATING A RESILIENT SOUL RETREAT**
*Facilitated by Mona Taylor, LCSW and Valerie Fagan, MSW.*
Learn new skills to deal with the challenges when you or someone close to you is diagnosed with cancer. Learn evidence based techniques and skills that will help you create a sense of inner calm and competency in the center of a storm. **9/13**

**DEDICATED MINDFULNESS PRACTICE GROUP**
Experience different approaches to meditation led by members of the group. We invite practitioners of all levels: there are no prerequisites to join the circle of practice. **Saturdays**

**HEALING TOUCH AND REIKI**
Individual sessions that focus on the energy system of the body to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and minimize side-effects. By appointment only. **Reiki - Wednesdays; Healing Touch - Tuesdays**

**MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION**
*Facilitated by Mike Healy, Ed.D*
Learn ways to reduce stress, lessen physical and emotional pain, and cope better with everyday demands. **Second Friday each month**

**ONCOLOGY MASSAGE**
Massage is available to cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers if available. A licensed and oncology trained massage therapist offers four session weekly. By appointment only. **Wednesdays and Thursdays**

**BLOOD CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**
*Facilitated by Lauren Liverman, LCSW*
The Blood Cancer Support Group is open to any patient or caregiver with a blood cancer diagnosis. This includes anyone affected by Leukemia, Lymphoma, Myeloma, and other hematologic illnesses managed by an oncologist. **First Tuesday each month**

**BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS**
*Facilitated by Sandy Pyle, RN, BSN, Nurse Navigator*
A group for women with a diagnosis of breast cancer to share information, resources, and experiences. **2nd Thursday each month**

**FACING CANCER WITH LOVE & LAUGHTER GENERAL SUPPORT & EDUCATION GROUP**
This group is open to any cancer patient, their family, or cancer caregiver. Lunch provided. Please call to RSVP. **3rd Wednesday each month**

**HEALING GRIEF WORKSHOP**
*Facilitated by Lauren Liverman, LCSW and Maggie Wells, MSW intern.*
A nine-week workshop for those who have lost someone through death. The loss does not have to be a cancer related death. Topics will include: understanding grief, remembering, accepting, stress management, anniversaries, memorialization, role changes, and closure. Pre-registration is required. **9/18**

**GRIEF SUPPORT**
Individual and group support for grieving children, adolescents, and adults.

**GYNECOLOGIC CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**
*Facilitated by Sandy Pyle, RN, BSN, Nurse Navigator*
A group for women with a diagnosis of any gynecologic cancer. **2nd Tuesday each month**

**ILLNESS ADJUSTMENT COUNSELING**
Individual sessions to address issues such as stress, anxiety, treatment decisions, and family communication.

**PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**
*Facilitated by Joel Siebentritt, LCSW*
A confidential setting for the prostate cancer patient to discuss prostate cancer treatment, side-effects, and survivorship. **First Thursday each month**

**NUTRITION COUNSELING AND SIDE-EFFECT MANAGEMENT**
Individual sessions by appointment.

**NUTRITION FOR A BETTER YOU: COOKING DEMO**
And The Grains Have It! Join Lisa Eisele, RD, LD to learn about the benefits of ancient grains. We will have a cooking demo with Piedmont Athens Regional’s own Chef Fred and enjoy a healthy lunch. Space is limited and registration is required. **9/13**