“There’s Always Hope”

Rita Hunt’s exercising was making the nurses in the cardiology unit at Shawnee Mission Medical Center (SMMC) nervous. She was there because of some complications after her initial round of chemotherapy.

“I was lying there doing mini leg lifts and circling my arms over my head,” Rita says with a laugh. “The nurses said, ‘You know, most people with counts as low as yours can’t even lift their heads off the pillow. Will you please lie down?’

A self-proclaimed “Energizer Bunny” and avid exerciser, Rita was doing the best she could after beginning chemo to treat her Grade 1, Stage 3 breast cancer.

That was in July of 2011. During a routine annual appointment the previous May, her gynecologist reminded her she needed to get a mammogram.

“I thought I would just go and get it done, but the technician said they needed more views of my left breast,” Rita shares. “Then they wanted to do a sonogram.

“My ex-husband is a radiologist. I knew that wasn’t good news.”

Rita was advised to consult a surgeon ASAP. She came to SMMC and received a biopsy. Her worst fear was confirmed. She had breast cancer.

“My husband couldn’t even wrap his mind around it when I told him,” she says. “We were both just in shock.”

Throughout Rita’s journey with breast cancer, he has been there to support her.

“Rita is a strong, independent woman by nature, but it was touching to see us grow together more as a couple through a very stressful and lengthy experience,” Lamar, Rita’s husband, shares. “She is a witness of

SMMC to Launch Outpatient Cancer Center

Long known as a leader in surgical and inpatient cancer care, Shawnee Mission Medical Center has been working on plans to grow its oncology services. It has just been announced that an outpatient Cancer Center will open this year, which will offer a full array of oncology services, including medical oncology, infusion and radiation therapies, and other integrative treatments. In addition, the Center will offer a PET/CT scanner which provides advanced imaging and treatment planning.

The new Cancer Center will complement SMMC’s current oncology services, which include an inpatient oncology department, surgical services and the first accredited Breast Center in Kansas City. With the addition of the Cancer Center, individuals will now be able to receive the full continuum of care – from diagnosis, through inpatient and outpatient services – at SMMC.

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Supporting SMMC a Win-Win for IBEW Local #124

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local Union #124 has made many contributions to Shawnee Mission Medical Center. They have been a partner in building projects such as the new Birth Center and Critical Services Tower. In addition, they have provided philanthropic support to The Foundation for Shawnee Mission Medical Center for several years.

“We are very grateful for organizations that help us meet the health challenges of children in our community. IBEW #124 has shown a tremendous commitment to kids with special needs,” said Lou Gehring, Senior Executive Director of The Foundation for Shawnee Mission Medical Center.

“We deepened our involvement with a major sponsorship three years ago,” said Terry Akins, Business Manager for the IBEW #124. “This money comes from the pockets of our membership. It’s a significant investment from our members in support of an incredibly valuable service to the Kansas City community.”

Terry goes on to describe the Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center as simply “indispensable.” He continues, “There’s nothing else like it. The resources parents find there are unique and unsurpassed.”

Support of SMMC and the Britain Center has also provided networking opportunities to the members of IBEW #124. “Support for the hospital provides some reciprocal networking as well,” Terry explains. “As the hospital expands, they’ll need skilled tradesmen and that puts our members to work.”

“SMMC is also part of our health care provider network and our members’ families love the hospital. We get wonderful feedback about patient experiences when our families use SMMC.”

Terry said they encourage other businesses, trade organizations, and individuals to support the Foundation and the Britain Center.

“Get involved. It’s a great organization and a great investment of IBEW #124 treasury funds to improve health and opportunities for children and their families.”

SMMC Welcomes Becca Bell

Becca Bell joined Shawnee Mission Medical Center in April 2013, as the Executive Director of Oncology Services. She most recently served as Director of Oncology Services at other local hospitals where she developed strong experience as a service line leader. Becca also served as the Director of Clinic Operations for the physician enterprise at St. Frances Health Center in Topeka. She received her undergraduate degree in Human Relations and her Master’s Degree in Organizational Administration from Mid-America Nazarene University.

Because You Care

Donors to the Foundation helped fund new patient communication boards in the Birth Center. The boards are used to update mothers and families on their plan of care and progress, as well as those of their baby. The communication boards let mom know who her care providers are, when her next pain med is due, and other pertinent information.
Rita Hunt

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God’s grace to her friends and family, and she is very appreciative of all of her blessings.”

Lamar and Rita weathered some harrowing moments throughout her treatment, but Rita always maintained her buoyant spirit.

“I’m a funny girl,” Rita says. She credits her positive outlook—and the power of her faith—for helping her pull through.

“My faith, and the joy I get from it, carried me,” she says. “You should be joyful every day you get to wake up. When it rains, I don’t get gloomy. I think ‘Yea, I get to see the rain!’”

Rita will have the chance to share her optimism and energy with others in her role as Honorary Chair of SMMC’s 2013 Focus on Breast Cancer Art Event.

“I want women to not be afraid to get mammograms,” Rita explains. “I want them to be inspired to stay healthy and take good care of themselves so they can deal with whatever comes their way.

“You can get through this. There’s always hope … always a light at the end of the tunnel.”

“If you wish to be removed from the list to receive future Foundation for SMMC fundraising materials, please email jan.dahl@shawneemission.org or call us at 913-676-2055. You may also use the enclosed response slip. Please provide your name and address when you contact us.

Fall 2013

“More Than Hope”

Allen Lee focuses on achievement at the Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center.

Dealing with triplets is a handful. It’s especially challenging when one of the children is born with special needs.

Allen Lee was born prematurely with his sisters Isabella and Caroline. The triplets also have a big sister named Jackie. Allen’s parents Fan and Leon were shocked to find out he had Down Syndrome.

“We didn’t know what to do,” says Fan. “We had no idea how to handle it. But after the shock wore off, we started looking around and trying to find out what kind of support was available to us.”

After they toured the Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center, they knew it was the place for Allen.

“We saw other infants in their classes,” says Fan. “I couldn’t believe they started therapy and helping the kids so early, but as parents, it’s what we need.

“I remember thinking, ‘Allen could learn here.’”

Fan says Allen excelled in occupational therapy — acquiring skills like learning to cut paper with scissors, holding a pen to write letters and draw lines.

“Things that other children and families may take for granted are huge accomplishments for children like Allen,” she explains. “I think he benefitted from the routine as well.”

Allen was enrolled in the Britain Center until he turned five years old. Thanks to the instruction and care he received there, he was able to start school with his sisters. This year, he’ll be in kindergarten.

Fan says the Britain Center is unique because it helps entire families learn how to encourage and nurture children challenged by special needs.

“We learned things we could do at home to help Allen,” she says. “When you’re a parent of a child with Down Syndrome you can get caught thinking ‘he can’t do this, he can’t do that.’

“The Britain Center focused on the things he could do and helped him get better at them.”

The Lee family is also grateful that generous donors to The Foundation for Shawnee Mission Medical Center help support children like Allen with scholarships.

“It’s more than hope,” she says. “And the scholarships open the door for all parents who need this service.

“There just aren’t enough thanks. The Britain Center makes it possible for you to realize the dreams you have for your kids.”
Giving Starts From Within – SMMC Associate Giving Program

Associate giving is an integral part of the culture at Shawnee Mission Medical Center and part of what makes the hospital ‘Much more than medicine’. Currently, there are over 600 associates who are part of the 1962 Associate Society. This is a special group of associates who have been giving for five or more years to the Foundation. Since the Foundation began, associates have given an amazing $1.8 million to change the lives of our patients, colleagues, and the community.

“I knew I worked with an exceptional group of nurses and doctors, but it wasn’t until my babies and I became patients at SMMC that I fully realized the competence and compassion of our team. My family and I could not have gotten through this experience without them and we are forever grateful.”

– Aly Millert, SMMC NICU nurse and grateful patient

DID YOU KNOW?

- SMMC has a special men’s health program to help you determine your fitness level and get you where you need to be. Call our Men’s Health Line at 913-632-3232 to schedule an appointment with one of our men’s health experts at Shawnee Mission Primary Care.

- The Shull Institute of Surgical Robotics at SMMC is the longest running robotic surgery program in the Kansas City metro area. And while SMMC has used the da Vinci since 2003, it was only last fall that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the specialized Single-Site instruments for use with the da Vinci Surgical System. Single-Site instruments are the next step in the evolution of surgical technologies making SMMC a leader in providing the surgical treatment of tomorrow.