



# The Belinda Sue Fund<sup>®</sup>

## for Ovarian Cancer Awareness & Research

### YEAR-END NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 2

December 2013

#### A Letter from the Chairman...

Dear Friends,

It has been another amazing year for The Belinda Sue Fund. Thanks to your overwhelming generosity, we have taken in over \$100,000 in donations this past year to further our mission of providing public awareness of Ovarian Cancer and to help develop a more accurate screening tool that identifies the disease in its earliest stage. We added another fundraising event this year, a golf outing, held in Tampa, Florida on November 16th. This and our other two fundraising events, the second annual Belinda Sue Fund Gala and the Detroit Zoo Walk, were successful beyond our wildest dreams, particularly the Zoo Walk which brought in over 1000 walkers! Among the walkers, were over 25 teams, walking in memory of, or support of, loved ones afflicted with this horrible disease. I cannot tell you how touching it was to speak with the family members and survivors, and hear their courageous stories. That makes me even more passionate about our cause!

In another important development this year, The Belinda Sue Fund has partnered with The Foundation for Women's Cancer (FWC), based in Chicago, for the purpose of aiding us in seeding a \$50,000 research grant centered around the development of an early-detection test for Ovarian Cancer. The grant is being called "The Belinda Sue" grant. The access FWC has to leading edge researchers is unsurpassed and I had the opportunity to speak with several of these researchers on a recent trip I made to Washington DC. On my trip I was also privileged to attend the annual FWC Walk to end "below the belt" women's cancers on November 3rd....what a humbling and profound experience it was, as I walked with 3,000 women and their families up Pennsylvania Avenue to the U.S. Capitol building. My heart goes out to the all of these affected women, as they battle their cancer with courage and grace!

In 2014, our fundraising focus will be toward the financial fulfillment of The Belinda Sue grant. The sooner we are able to raise the \$50,000 seed funding, the sooner the work will begin on new discovery research to save lives through early detection! **Can you imagine if The Belinda Sue grant makes the definitive discovery of that elusive screening tool and your contribution made that possible?!**

We will continue to use our very popular billboard on a quarterly basis in 2014 as we advertise our annual fundraising events. Watch for the billboards as you traverse southeastern Michigan next year. We also used our billboard in Tampa in October, as we advertised our golf fundraiser. It vibrantly lit up the Tampa night sky and was commented on by many passersby. We are even looking to place a billboard

(See "Letter" p.2)

#### A Very Successful Zoo Walk!

The Belinda Sue Fund's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Zoo Walk was held on Sunday, September 8, 2013 at the Detroit Zoo. Over 1,000 folks attended between walkers, volunteers, sponsors, and vendors which surpassed the number of attendees from last year and over \$10,000 was raised!

The event kicked off with our guest emcee, Cheryl Chodun, retired newscaster from WXYZ-TV, who engaged the crowd and delivered a great message about the importance of promoting Ovarian Cancer awareness. Dena Raptis, our most enthusiastic fitness trainer, returned for a second year to warm up the crowd in advance of the Walk start. Tom Nantais and his kids, Matt Nantais & Caroline Maykovich, along with his granddaughter, Sophia, officially cut the ribbon to begin the Walk. The path this year took folks around the back part of the Zoo where they could enjoy seeing the apes, lions, and bears. Our deejays, Richard Ford & Curt Patterson, returned this year to keep the spirit upbeat and fun! Vendors had the opportunity to display and sell their wares with a portion of their sales going to The Belinda Sue Fund. We also had massage therapists offering chair massages with donations also going to The Belinda Sue Fund. And let's not forget the kids. Clara Munkarah did a great job overseeing the kids' activities, which included games, coloring/drawing activities, and face painting. Clara's creativity and organizational skills really allowed the children to have a memorable experience. Attendees were also able to enjoy some delicious bagels and coffee from Bruegger's Bagels and fruit from Ciaramitaro Wholesalers both before and after the Walk. And very special appreciation goes to Team Mama Bear who donated three wonderful baskets for our raffle.

We also would like to extend a big thank you to all of our sponsors, vendors, and volunteers, including Wayne State University's Baseball Team and Women's Basketball Team as well as

(See "Zoo Walk" p.2)

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*"Letter" (con't)*

on the I-95 corridor between New York and Florida, as "snowbirds" make their way south in January and February.

As we approach the Holiday Season, I would again like to thank you for your support and generosity of our compelling mission. If you would like to help us fund The Belinda Sue grant that, perhaps, makes discovery history, we would be most sincerely grateful. Please log onto our website ([www.belindasuefund.org](http://www.belindasuefund.org)) and look for the **DONATE** icon. As always, I cannot tell you how much we appreciate it.

I wish you and yours a peaceful and joyous Holiday Season. Please spend time with your families and take in what really counts in life!

Sincerely,

Tom

## **A Personal Message**

*Every issue we feature a special message or personal story of someone who has been affected by Ovarian Cancer either directly or indirectly. In this issue we highlight the story of the Ginny Dimsa, an Ovarian Cancer survivor.*

Ginny's journey began, like many of her friends who were diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer, in the Fall of 2005. During that period of time she felt very tired, but attributed it to taking on too much in her daily life and helping out her and her husband's younger daughter who has special needs. Thinking that a vacation was just what they needed, they planned a trip to Florida for the month of January 2006. During her vacation, Ginny was still feeling very tired which was unusual for her as she was always a high-energy person. At that time she was also experiencing other symptoms: feeling very bloated, clothes were getting tighter, getting full fast when eating, pains in her back, and just not feeling well in general. Ginny had also noticed a lump on her left side.

After returning from vacation, in February she made an appointment with her nurse practitioner for a check-up and a pap smear. Of course nothing was found. Still concerned and not feeling well, in March 2006 Ginny made an appointment with her primary care physician (whom she had been seeing for 24 years) for a physical and expressed all of her symptoms and concerns. Still nothing was diagnosed. In April, Ginny saw her primary care doctor again at which time she was diagnosed with double bronchial pneumonia and referred to a pulmonary specialist. Ginny now realizes all of the fluid from the yet-to-be diagnosed Ovarian Cancer was spreading to her lungs. After being treated for double bronchial pneumonia, she still was not feeling well and the lump on her left side was getting larger. Again, she returned to her primary care physician and this time he ordered a CT-scan of her chest and abdomen, not her pelvis; and still no definitive diagnosis. Ironically, Ginny's primary care doctor's own mother had previously been diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer, but he was not able to diagnose it in her.

Shortly thereafter during one night, she was having severe back pains and was unable to walk. She was taken to the emergency room and was seen by two ER doctors who could not diagnose her and sent her home. By the end of July 2006, after six months of advocating for herself along with seeing five doctors (two of whom were ER doctors), one nurse practitioner and feeling like no one was really listening to her, Ginny made an appointment with her gynecologist. She had a CA-125 blood test and an ultrasound which confirmed a diagnosis of Ovarian Cancer. Within that same week she had a colonoscopy and was scheduled for surgery on August 1, 2006. Ginny was hospitalized for 23 days

*(See "A Personal Message" next column)*

*"A Personal Message" (con't)*

following surgery at which time the Ovarian Cancer was confirmed to be Stage IIIc. Ginny went through nine cycles of chemotherapy and tolerated it well. In November 2007 her doctor put her on Hexalen, a chemotherapy maintenance pill, for six cycles which she feels helped with her remission.

Since she was in remission and knowing her family history of having four first cousins and an aunt dying from Ovarian or Breast Cancer, she knew that she had to be proactive and have genetic testing done. The testing showed that she was positive for the BRCA1 genetic mutation. After doing her homework and research, in December 2008 Ginny decided to have a prophylactic bilateral mastectomy, which she believes saved her life; and, therefore, has no regrets in having the procedure done. For Ginny, it was the only right thing to do. Following her surgery, her two daughters had genetic testing done and it was discovered that her older daughter is negative for the BRCA1 genetic mutation, but her younger daughter is BRCA1 positive.

Ginny is just about 7½ years into her journey which has had many ups and downs. She had often wondered what her real purpose is on this earth. She now realizes that we are here to take care of one another, to reach out to one another and be there for each other to bring hope, strength, courage, and love. Ginny is not only a strong advocate for Ovarian Cancer survivors, outreach and education, but she demonstrates in her everyday life the importance of caring for one another, most specifically by sending cards and messages of hope to her fellow "Ovarian Cancer sisters" on a very regular basis. She says the only reason she is here today is because of a brilliant surgeon and her deep, unwavering faith. And for this she will always be very grateful and thankful.

*"Zoo Walk" (con't)*

our photographers: Kathryn Rand, Ray Manning, and HOUR Detroit Magazine. Lastly, this event could not have been as successful as it was without our Volunteer Coordinator, Lynn Lupa, and overall Event Organizer and VP of The Belinda Sue Fund Board, Michele Munkarah. Many hours of preparation and hard work by these two ladies helped to make the event run seamlessly.

Your contribution, whether it be time, talent, or treasure, is equally important in making events, such as our Zoo Walk, successful in helping to fulfill our mission to raise awareness of Ovarian Cancer and to find an early-detection tool. Save the date for next year's Zoo Walk which will take place at the Detroit Zoo on **Sunday, September 7, 2014**. We hope that the attendance continues to grow and are grateful for the support shown by all of you!

## In Memoriam

It is with deepest regret that we acknowledge the passing of one of our Board members, Sara Mae Gerbitz. Sara lost her battle to Ovarian Cancer on September 12, 2013. She was a partner of the Law Firm of Kitch Drutchas Wagner Valitutti and Sherbrook in Detroit. While only a Board Member of The Belinda Sue Fund for less than a year, Sara made worthwhile contributions and her legal expertise was always welcomed. Her sparkling personality truly lit up a room. Sara was a joy to be around and it was a great pleasure having her as a member of our Board of Directors. Sara will be sorely missed by family, friends, and colleagues as well as her "Belinda Sue family."



## Did You Know?

- 15 to 40 percent of women who have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation will be diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer over the course of their lifetime, whereas 1.4 percent of women in the general population will be diagnosed
- Still, 85 to 90 percent of Ovarian Cancer cases have no clear genetic link
- Comparison of cancer survival rates:\*
  - Women diagnosed with Breast Cancer in 1977 experienced a 5-year survival rate of 75%; today the 5-year survival rate is estimated to be 90%
  - Women diagnosed with Cervical Cancer in 1975-1977 experienced a 5-year survival rate of 69%; today the 5-year survival rate is estimated to be 69%
  - Women diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer in 1975-1977 experienced a 5-year survival rate of 36%; today the 5-year survival rate is estimated to be 43%

*\*Facts taken from The American Cancer Society*

## Our First Annual Golf Outing

The 2013 Tee Off for Ovarian Cancer Awareness & Research Golf Tournament held in Tampa, FL on November 16<sup>th</sup> was an amazing event. Westchase Golf Course hosted the outing where we had 17 foursomes come and play from Central and West Central Florida as well as Michigan to help raise awareness for Ovarian Cancer. A local catering business, "Faedo's On the Go," donated award-winning Cuban sandwiches (a staple in Tampa) for lunch prior to the shotgun start. Fortunately the rain held off for the afternoon and golfers were able to enjoy contests on many holes. Dan Nantais almost got a hole-in-one where he would have won a 2013 Ford Focus sponsored by Bill Currie Ford Tampa. The ball bounced in and out of the cup...so close! Sullivan Cotter and Associates, Inc. was a beverage cart sponsor and graciously donated their foursome to allow four Wounded Warriors to play in the tournament. The evening concluded with a delicious barbecue chicken dinner and awards ceremony. Fantastic raffle prizes were given away and great silent auction items were bid on. Overall, we raised about \$9,000 and can't wait to do it again next year!

## Make a Donation!

To make a tax-deductible donation, go to [www.belindasuefund.org](http://www.belindasuefund.org) and click on the "Donate" tab or mail a check to Belinda Sue Fund PO Box 210159 Auburn Hills, MI 48321. Help us fund our seed grant!!

## Save-the-Date!!

### Event: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Gala

Saturday, 5/17/2014

The Henry, Dearborn, MI

*Invitations to be mailed and on-line registration to open March 2014*

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### Event: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Zoo Walk

Sunday, 9/7/2014

The Detroit Zoo, Royal Oak, MI

*On-line registration to open July 2014*

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### Event: 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Golf Tournament

November 2014 (specific date TBD)

Westchase Golf Course, Tampa, FL

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**This year's Breakfast with Santa, originally scheduled on 12/14/2013, has been cancelled.**



The Belinda Sue Fund's 2nd Annual Zoo Walk held on September 8, 2013  
For more photos of the Zoo Walk and Golf Tournament visit our website: [www.belindasuefund.org](http://www.belindasuefund.org)