



The Belinda Sue Fund®

for Ovarian Cancer Awareness & Research

NEWSLETTER

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A \$10,000 Grant from CAAP

On March 28th the Center for Arab American Philanthropy (CAAP) organized an event, "100 Arab American Women Who Care" at the Arab American National Museum where \$10,000 was raised and awarded to The Belinda Sue Fund. CAAP, a national organization launched by ACCESS in 2006, has strong philanthropic passions. Its goal according to its founder, Maha Freij, is to develop a "powerful and cohesive Arab-American community who has a strong voice in American society."¹ Now in its second year, 100 Arab American Women Who Care uses a crowdfunding model wherein each woman donates \$100 and submits the name of her preferred charity. Three charities are randomly drawn and a supporter of each of those charities speaks about why her charity is most deserving. Karma Adra, whose mother suffered from Ovarian Cancer and is now in remission, spoke passionately about The Belinda Sue Fund. Adra stated that supporting The Belinda Sue Fund was a way to give back to an organization that is working for her mom and for all women.¹ After each supporter speaks, a vote is taken and the winning charity is awarded the grant. We at The Belinda Sue Fund are honored and grateful to have been the recipient of this year's grant which will help us in accomplishing our goal to fund research in finding an early detection tool. ¹ <http://www.pressandguide.com/articles/2015/04/01/news/>

FWC Seed Grant Funded

After receiving a generous grant from the Center for Arab American Philanthropy (see story above) and with proceeds from our 4th Annual Gala (see Gala recap on page 3), The Belinda Sue Fund has successfully fulfilled the co-funding of a research seed grant through the Foundation for Women's Cancer (www.foundationforwomenscancer.org).

Our hope is that this grant, cofounded with Patrick Welker who lost his wife, Mary-Jane, to Ovarian Cancer, will be the starting point on which credible and successful research will be built in finding an early detection tool for this deadly disease. Ovarian Cancer takes far too many lives and with early detection those lives can be saved!

The Foundation for Women's Cancer (FWC) will publish the grant in their upcoming Research Booklet in June 2015 along with a request for proposals. The actual grant will then be awarded in March 2016 at FWC's Annual Meeting in San Diego. We look forward to the awarding of this grant next Spring to that well-deserving researcher and hope that this may be the breakthrough for an early-detection tool that has been sought after for so long.

Start Gearing Up for the 4th Annual Zoo Walk!

Get your teams together for our 4th Annual Zoo Walk which will take place on **Sunday, September 27th** at the Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak. Registration will open in mid-July. And just like last year, when you register for the Walk, you will also be given the option to create your own fundraising page where you can get family and friends who are not able to attend the Walk to donate online. It will be a very simple process that will allow you to help us raise a lot of money. The individual/team raising the most money will also receive a prize at the Zoo Walk!

And just as in previous years, there will be entertainment, food, and a fun warm-up before the start of the Walk; as well as chair massages for the adults and face painting for the kids. We also anticipate a number of vendors there selling their wares with a portion of their sales at the event going back to The Belinda Sue Fund.

The last three Zoo Walks brought in nearly a combined 3,000 walkers. We estimate that those numbers will continue to grow. Your continued support in this event will go a long way in achieving our mission in spreading awareness of this dreaded disease and funding research to find that early-detection tool which is so desperately needed in helping to save more women's lives. Remember, September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month so let's end the month with a great Walk where we will honor those women battling this disease while remembering our fallen heroines who continue to watch over us.

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What's New in the Medical World?

Accurate ways to detect ovarian cancer early could have a great impact on the cure rate. Researchers are testing new ways to screen women for ovarian cancer, and a national repository for blood and tissue samples from ovarian cancer patients is being established to aid in these studies. One method being tested is looking at the pattern of proteins in the blood (called *proteomics*) to find ovarian cancer early.¹ Furthermore, researchers at University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and Moores Cancer Center have now identified six mRNA isoforms (bits of genetic material) produced by ovarian cancer cells but not normal cells, opening up the possibility that they could be used to diagnose early-stage ovarian cancer.²

"We were inspired by many studies aimed at using DNA to detect cancer," said first author Christian Barrett, PhD, bioinformatics expert and project scientist in the UC San Diego School of Medicine Institute for Genomic Medicine. "But we wondered if we could instead develop an ovarian cancer detection test based on tumor-specific mRNA that has disseminated from cancer cells to the cervix and can be collected during a routine Pap test." To determine if mRNAs can be used to distinguish ovarian cancer cells from normal cells, the team developed a custom bioinformatics algorithm and used it to mine two large public databases of genetic information — The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) and the Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEx) program, both sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. From these, the researchers were able to analyze mRNA sequence data from 296 ovarian cancers and 1,839 normal tissue samples.²

Using this bioinformatics approach, the researchers identified six mRNA isoform molecules that have the tumor specificity required for an early detection diagnostic of ovarian cancer. "Our experimental findings were made in a laboratory and were performed on ovarian cancer cells from cell lines," said study co-author Cheryl Saenz, MD. "Clinical trials will need to be conducted on women to confirm the presence of these markers in women that we know have cancer, as well as to document the absence of the markers in women that do not have ovarian cancer."²

The authors acknowledge a few limitations to their approach, including technical limitations in detecting mRNA isoforms, a shortage of normal ovarian and fallopian tube control samples and the possibility that tumor cells that disseminate to the cervix may not genetically act the same as the primary tumor. Still, based on these promising initial results, the authors recommend expanding their process for identifying tumor-specific mRNA isoforms to the 30 additional tumor types for which sufficient amounts of RNA sequence already exist.²

¹<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/ovariancancer/detailedguide/ovarian-cancer-new-research>

²<http://health.ucsd.edu/news/releases/Pages/2015-05-25-markers-set-stage-for-early-diagnosis-ovarian-cancer.aspx>

A Personal Message

Every issue we feature a special message or personal story of someone who is affected by Ovarian Cancer either directly or indirectly. In this issue we highlight the story of Sandy Corrigan, an Ovarian Cancer Survivor.

In April 2012 Sandy lost her husband of 52 years to lung cancer. He was diagnosed just seven months earlier. The summer after he died, Sandy began experiencing extreme fatigue. She was always told that it was normal under the circumstances.

The fatigue continued and in the Fall 2012 Sandy began to experience abdominal bloating. She went to see two different doctors about the bloating. There was not much concern. The bloating continued to increase each week, created discomfort, and left her short of breath. One of the doctors did order a CT scan. Still, nothing was treated with any urgency. Sandy was advised to have a series of follow-up appointments.

The day following her CT scan, Sandy continued to have shortness of breath. Her oldest daughter insisted on taking her to the Emergency Room. She was admitted to the hospital right away and had 2.5 liters of fluid removed from her abdomen. At that time cancer cells were detected in the fluid. Sandy's three sons and two daughters agreed it was time for a second opinion. Following her second opinion, Sandy underwent an 8-hour debulking surgery in December 2012 and a diagnosis of Stage IIIc Ovarian Cancer was confirmed. At that time, she spent 23 days in the hospital. Sandy was finally able to resume and then complete her chemotherapy

(See "A Personal Message" next column)

"A Personal Message" (con't)

treatments by July 2013. The debulking surgery had also caused partial bowel obstructions, which resulted in numerous trips to the Emergency Room. However, through careful diet management and a better sense of knowing the signs that a problem might be occurring, she is grateful that she has not had to return to the ER in almost one year!

Sandy is happy to report that as of today, there is no evidence of disease in her case. Of course, the thought of a recurrence is always on her mind. With the help of her amazing support system (consisting of her five wonderful children), Sandy stays very focused and does the best she can under the circumstances. And her children have been there every step of the way. They go with her to doctors' appointments, sit with her when she's had to go to the ER, attend chemotherapy appointments, ensure the bills are paid, make meals, care for her dog, look after her house, and much more. And her grandchildren also show wonderful support in their own special way by planning a Christmas celebration, making her cards, and drawing her pictures.

After seeing one of The Belinda Sue Fund's billboards, Sandy and her family have been active supporters of the organization. They have participated in two Zoo Walks, two Annual Galas, and put up teal ribbons during the month of September because it is so important to raise awareness of this disease. Sandy says that she is truly blessed to have such a supportive family. She goes on to say that together they laugh, cry, and pray...and for that, she is most grateful.

A Night of Fun at Our 4th Annual Gala!

The Belinda Sue Fund held its 4th Annual Gala, “A Black & White Affair with A Touch of Teal,” on April 18, 2015 at The Henry in Dearborn. And what an enjoyable evening it was in which almost \$25,000 was raised. In keeping with the theme of the event, guests wore black, white, or teal and the room was elegantly decorated in those same colors. The Orchard Lake Philharmonic Society returned for a third year in a row to entertain attendees during the cocktail hour with some beautiful string music. Many great items were, again, donated by wonderfully generous businesses and individuals for the very successful silent auction. Winning bidders went home with great pieces of jewelry, courtside seats to a Pistons game, a golf outing at Oakland Hills, overnight stays at both the Dearborn and Somerset Inns, and beautiful photography and pottery just to name a few.





Following the cocktail hour and dinner, we were honored to have Cheryl Chodun, former Channel 7 Action News reporter, return as our emcee. Her enthusiasm and warm spirit really helped to create an atmosphere that was both inviting and fun! The evening’s program began with the presentation of the “Making a Difference” Award along with a \$5,000 grant to Dr. Anil K. Sood of MD Anderson Cancer Center to further advance his research in Ovarian Cancer. *(See “Gala” next column)*

“Gala” (con’t)

Dr. Sood gave a very compelling speech on MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program – a speech that was filled with hope and encouragement for those battling cancer. The second award presented that evening was the “Teal Tribute” Award given to Team Mama Bear. Accepting the award was Melissa Burke, a 6-year survivor of Ovarian Cancer, who formed Team Mama Bear following the death of her mother, Joan Jaime, in 2005 of the same disease. Melissa’s sister, Rebecca Dickow, spoke eloquently on behalf of the Team about their unending commitment to help continue to raise awareness of this disease.

The evening’s program concluded with a very interactive live auction headed by Cheryl Chodun and Tom Nantais. Guests enjoyed the remainder of the evening dancing to the great mix of music from Disc Jockey Productions, who also provided the beautiful teal uplighting in the room. Memory Snappers returned with a photo booth where guests could capture their photographic memories in a very fun way! And as a parting gift, everyone was able to enjoy a delicious black & white themed candy table. All in all, it was another successful event and we are looking forward to doing it again next year!

Did You Know?

-  The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2015 about 21,290 new cases of Ovarian Cancer will be diagnosed and 14,180 women will die of Ovarian Cancer in the United States¹
-  This is only a slight decrease from the numbers in 2014 where there were an estimated 21,980 new cases of Ovarian Cancer and 14,270 deaths in the United States¹
-  The overall 5-year survival rate from 2004-2010 for women with Ovarian Cancer was 44.6%¹
-  The 5-year survival rate has only very slowly increased in the last 40 years:²
 - 1975-1977 – 36% 5-year survival rate
 - 1987-1989 – 38% 5-year survival rate

¹Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program of the National Cancer Institute

²American Cancer Society

Make a Donation!

To make a tax-deductible donation, go to www.belindasuefund.org and click on the “Donate” tab

Save-the-Date!!

Event: 4th Annual Zoo Walk

Sunday, 9/27/2015

Detroit Zoo in Royal Oak

Online registration opens in mid-July

Event: 3rd Annual Golf Tournament

Saturday, 11/14/2015

Westchase Golf Course, Tampa, FL

Online registration opens in early September

Event: 5th Annual Gala

Date & Location TBD

Invitations to be mailed & online registration to open Feb 2016



L to R: Melissa Burke, Rebecca Dickow, Tom Nantais and Cheryl Chodun



Guests enjoying the delicious candy table



L to R: Dr. Adnan Munkarah, Dr. Anil K. Sood, Tom Nantais and Cheryl Chodun

The Belinda Sue Fund’s 4th Annual Gala held on April 18, 2015
For more photos visit our website: www.belindasuefund.org