AVVane!



Prevention and awareness information from The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center



Members of the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program Team: Standing (left to right): Melissa Seres, Michelle Purcaro Sitting (left to right): Jessica Tynan-Lynch, Karen Sabbath.

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Making New Strides with the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program

How will my life change after my cancer treatment? Will I have to drastically alter my lifestyle? My activity level? My diet? Will my cancer come back?

For cancer patients, one of the most important elements of overcoming their diagnosis is having hope for the future. Often that future comes with challenging questions. Those questions – and many others – are addressed in HLRCC's groundbreaking survivorship program, Stepping Forward.

As advances in cancer treatment, technology and research help many patients live healthy lives long after their active therapy is complete, Stepping Forward addresses the needs of cancer survivors and provides them with an effective post-treatment plan for care, disease prevention and support.

This interconnected set of services includes physical therapy, oncology rehabilitation, emotional support, nutritional guidance, exercise, complementary therapies and educational seminars featuring inspirational and informative speakers. In addition, the Waterbury YMCA, which is partnering with HLRCC, offers a 12-week free membership for survivors with group workouts and strength and conditioning programs developed in conjunction with the Livestrong™ program.

Coordinating this wide range of programs and services requires a dedicated staff of healthcare professionals. With Michelle Purcaro, APRN, and Jessica Tynan-Lynch, MSW, ACS Community Relations Manager, at the helm, HLRCC has a remarkable team in place to put all the pieces of Stepping Forward together. (See article on page 3.)



STAGES OF SURVIVORSHIP

At HLRCC, we consider a person to be a survivor from the moment of diagnosis; Stepping Forward participants include all breast cancer

patients who have completed cancer treatment in the past year.

Survivorship can be broken into three distinct stages:

Living with cancer begins at the moment of diagnosis and focuses on treatment, which can involve surgery, chemotherapy, radiation

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Making New Strides...

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and/or medications to eliminate or control the disease.

Living through cancer refers to the period of time following treatment. At this stage, patients are invited to meet with Michelle Purcaro to develop a Treatment Summary and a Survivorship Care Plan. "Patients appreciate the Treatment Summary," says Michelle, "because they can bring it with them to any appointments they have."

"The Survivorship Care Plan is the individual component focusing on moving forward," explains Michelle. "When patients are going through treatment, they can be very overwhelmed. They don't know what to ask or how cancer is going to impact them. Once they finish treatment, the Stepping Forward program provides them with a safe environment to talk about their future, raise questions and review their options."

Jessica Tynan-Lynch is the next person survivors encounter. Jessica is the Community Relationship Manager for the American Cancer Society office and the Survivorship Navigator for the Stepping Forward program. "Often we have patients who are coming here every day for radiation," explains Jessica. "By the time they're done, they've gotten to know the staff and feel like they're part of the Leever community. Leaving suddenly can be a shock. The Stepping Forward Survivorship Program offers a nice way to stay connected post-treatment."

Living beyond cancer begins after treatment and continues into longterm survivorship. Survivors continue to take advantage of the many support groups (listed on the back page) and educational programs with topics such as dealing with stress and managing fatigue.

FUNDING AND THE FUTURE

Because the Stepping Forward program is free to all participants, maintaining adequate funding is critical. A grant funded by the CT Challenge Bike Ride provided the base upon which the program was built. The Ride, held every



Portrait of a Survivor

"The support of the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program definitely made a huge difference in my recovery."

Anastasia is a 42-year-old mother of two young children under 9. She was diagnosed with breast

cancer and underwent a double mastectomy with some lymph nodes removed, as well as reconstructive surgery. Anastasia went through 16 weeks of chemotherapy, every other week. With the help of an extremely positive attitude and the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program, she is now a cancer survivor.

"I did my chemotherapy at the Leever Cancer Center and the resources were all there. Once I started chemo, I also started energy therapy two or three times a week. I believe that's what gave me the strength to get through those difficult first weeks.

"I also took advantage of other Stepping Forward Survivorship Programs. I consulted the dietitian, Karen Sabbath, who gave me a lot of information about how your skin changes during chemotherapy and what you can do to help build yourself up. I got a massage from Nancy Traver, LMT, who was great, and I went to some lectures and an educational dinner. After chemo, I didn't have any hair, so I started to see a physical therapist in Waterbury who gives therapy specifically for breast cancer patients. I also participated in the American Cancer Society's Look Good... Feel Better! Program where I got a wig and a few hats and scarves. It was great to be with a whole group of women in the same boat that I was!

"The Stepping Forward Survivorship Program is amazing! Michelle Purcaro was wonderful ... she gave me everything I needed to get through cancer treatment. It was a godsend. And Leever is such a positive place! The whole building is cheerful, and the nurses were absolutely amazing. When I was done with my chemo, they gave me a graduation scroll with an inspirational quote on it that they all signed. Without these resources, I would have been lost. I wouldn't have had such a positive attitude. And a positive attitude is what really gets you through it!"

July in Westport, continues to be one of our most important fundraising events, thanks to the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of the participants. 60% of the proceeds raised by Team Leever go directly to the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program. (See article on page 6.)

By 2015, the American College of Surgeons will require all cancer programs to provide survivorship services. The Leever Cancer Center is already ahead of the game – and is looking forward to adding even more services to our program in the future.

"We started working just with breast

cancer patients, but eventually we would like to expand to all other cancer patients as well," says Jessica. "I see the program continuing to grow exponentially, both in the number of patients that we serve and in the types of resources we make available."

Michelle adds, "The program is in its infancy and still developing. At this point, we'd really like to get feedback from both patients and staff in order to shape the program as we move forward." For more information, call Michelle Purcaro, APRN, at 203-575-5504 or visit the website at leevercancercenter.org.

The Survivorship Team Keeps "Stepping Forward" a Step Ahead



After patients complete treatment, nurses in Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology or surgical offices determine if a patient would benefit from the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program. These patients are referred directly to MICHELE PURCARO, APRN. Michelle contacts each patient with a letter introducing the program, following up with a phone call a few weeks later. She meets one-on-one with each interested patient to develop a Treatment Summary and a Survivorship Care Plan. The Treatment Summary recaps all treatment a patient has received, from surgery to radiation, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy. The

Survivorship Care Plan is an individualized strategy focused on moving forward. Patients are presented with the many services offered through the Leever Cancer Center and then introduced to Jessica Tynan-Lynch, the program's Survivorship Navigator.

Michelle started her career as an acute care nurse at Hartford Hospital, and later worked in a private oncology practice for 13 years and coordinated the HLRCC Clinical Research program. She came to Leever last year to help create and spearhead the Stepping Forward program.

"Often when patients complete therapy, they ask, 'What do I do now?" Michelle explains. "Things have changed. They look at life differently. Stepping Forward provides a bridge to the 'new normal.' It is our hope that this program will help them adjust and know what to expect in the years to come."



Once a patient has met with Michelle Purcaro and has a Survivorship Care Plan, JESSICA TYNAN-LYNCH, MSW, follows up to facilitate appointments, keep accurate statistics, make follow-up calls and handle community relationships. She describes all the activities survivors can participate in post-treatment, such as the YMCA Livestrong[™] program, physical therapy, nutrition and social work services, energy therapy, art therapy and various support groups. She touches base with survivors a few weeks later to be sure they were able to connect with all of their referrals, ask them if they have any other questions, and remind them that the program is here for them.

Jessica began her work with the American Cancer Society in 2008 after serving for eight years as a social worker in New York City. She is a native of the Waterbury area and has a master's degree in social work.

"It's great for me to be right inside the Leever Cancer Center so we can speak to our patients and survivors right on the spot about our program," says Jessica. "And of course it is also very beneficial for the patients. Survivorship Programs have become very popular because patients are doing so well post-treatment, and support is a happy thing for them once they end their treatment and become lifelong cancer survivors."

STEPPING FORWARD AFFILIATED SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

NUTRITION SERVICES

Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO, Oncology Nutrition Specialist

PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES

Melissa Seres, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C, Social Worker

MASSAGE THERAPY

Nancy Traver, LMT

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Mary Beth Olah, PT, STAR-certified

ENERGY THERAPY

ART THERAPY

Kyle Barreuther, MAAT (Master of Arts in Art Therapy)

JOURNALING

GREATER WATERBURY YMCA

Meghan Curley, Personal Trainer

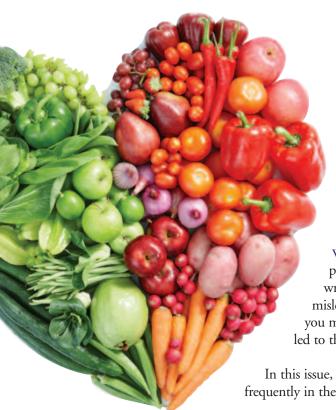
SUPPORT GROUPS

American Cancer Society
Reach to Recovery
American Cancer Society
Look Good... Feel Better!
Hope Mutual Aid Group
Melissa Seres, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C,
Social Worker

For a full list of support groups: leevercancercenter.org/ support services



The Right Team. Right Here.



BUSTED:

Five Common Nutrition Myths Debunked

by Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO

YOU OPEN A MAGAZINE OR WEBPAGE AND THERE IT IS: BRAND-NEW INFORMATION THAT COULD HELP TO CURE CANCER, MAKE YOU LOSE WEIGHT INSTANTLY AND PAINLESSLY, IMPROVE YOUR METABOLISM (and possibly your sex life!) and rid your body of unwanted toxins. Is it always wrong? No, but the truth often lies between the lines, and readers can be easily misled. How do you know if it is fact or fallacy? The answer, unfortunately, is that you may not know unless you do your homework and research the evidence that led to the recommendation.

In this issue, we discuss five of the 10 most common nutrition myths that are seen all too frequently in the press. (We'll talk about the other five in our next issue.)

Myth 1: A detox diet is a good way to clean the toxins out of your body.

Truth: Many of the detoxification or "detox" diets available to consumers involve some type of fasting, eating from a very limited group of foods, excessive fluids or taking intestinal clearing supplements or enemas, which often act as laxatives. They claim to rid the body of unwanted chemicals or toxins that can be harmful to your health. Contrary to popular belief, there is no scientific evidence to show the need for or benefit of detoxification diets. In fact, part of the "job description" of your liver, kidneys and intestines is to get rid of those toxins every day. Excessive fasting and/or use of laxative-type supplements can cause dehydration, headaches, low blood pressure or irregular heartbeat. To "detoxify" in a healthy way, eat a healthy plant-based diet with plenty of fluids, whole grains, vegetables, healthy fats, lean proteins and unprocessed foods.

Myth 2: Late night snacking makes you gain weight.

Truth: "I was so good all day, and then **blew** it with snacking at night. I'll **never** lose this weight." Those frequent trips to the pantry or fridge at night seem to be the stumbling block for many who are trying to watch their



weight. But, contrary to popular belief, it is not the time of day that determines weight gain, but the total intake for the day. Based on our daily routines, we need the majority of our fuel during the day when we are busy and active, but it is not unusual for people to skip breakfast and then eat more and more as the day goes on. By the time the evening comes, we have reached or exceeded our requirements and the extra gets "stored" as fat. When planning your foods for the day, keep in mind what your body needs and when it needs it; in the evenings, when tired and bored, eat a small healthy snack, or better yet, read a book and go to bed earlier!

Myth 3: Buy only organic milk to avoid hormones and antibiotics.

Truth: ALL cow's milk contains some hormones since it comes from a lactating animal. The problem is that some cows are given synthetic hormones (Recombinant Bovine Somatotropin [rBST] or Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone [rBGH]) to boost

their milk production. Addition of these hormones can result in mastitis, or inflammation of the cow's milk ducts, requiring administration of antibiotics. Many experts have expressed concern about antibiotic residues in milk and the role they play in creating antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria. For that reason, it is recommended that when purchasing milk, you look for products with no added synthetic hormones or antibiotics. Organic milk is free of both, as are some other available brands of milk. This information can be found on the label. If you have a milk allergy or an aversion to drinking milk, there are many alternatives to getting adequate calcium and protein.

Myth 4: Honey, brown and raw sugar, and agave syrup are healthier than white sugar.

Truth: Although there are subtle dif-

ferences between these sugars, from a nutritional standpoint, they are very similar. Although some may be "more natural" and "less processed" than table sugar, your body cannot really tell the difference. In fact, your body metabolizes them very similarly. The bottom line is that they are all concentrated sources of empty calories that can contribute to excessive intake.

Myth 5: Everyone should eat a gluten-free diet.

Truth: Eating gluten-free is the latest nutrition craze. Gluten is a type of protein found in wheat, barley, rye and any foods made with these grains. A gluten-free diet is essential for those with celiac disease or known gluten sensitivity. But if you are not allergic, there is no need to avoid these products, especially in their non-processed, whole forms. There are hundreds of gluten-free products available in

supermarkets and health food stores, many of which are expensive, high in calories and overly processed, just like their gluten-containing counterparts. A gluten-free diet is not a weight loss diet. However, when people eliminate excessive amounts of starchy foods (like bread and pasta) from their diets, they often cut calories, lose some weight and feel better. Whether the grain you choose is gluten-free (corn, rice, millet or quinoa) or not, eating more whole grains is a healthy choice. A gluten-free diet is not harmful in any way, but may not provide the added health benefits promoted in the media.

It is understandable to be confused by everything you read or hear on television. Getting accurate information will enable you to make good choices! And be sure to look for our next issue where we'll debunk five more nutrition myths!



The Right Team. Right Here.

HLRCC celebrates Survivors

at Survivors Day 2012

On Thursday, November 8, The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center hosted Survivors Day 2012 to celebrate cancer survivors and their caregivers, as well as the Center's 10th anniversary.

Festivities included a community-friendly event featuring a light dinner and a raffle of items donated by the Leever Cancer Center and the American Cancer Society.

The highlight of the evening was guest speaker Eileen Kaplan, author of the inspirational humor book *Laughter Is the Breast Medicine*. Eileen, a speaker for wellness, cancer awareness advocate and mentor, entertained the audience with her wit and wisdom regarding surviving breast cancer, disease prevention and dealing with the issues of cancer and its aftermath. Her philosophy is that laughter is therapeutic and her message is that having a good attitude and positive thinking is crucial in dealing with the disease and taking good care of yourself. Eileen donated \$5 from the sale of each book to the HLRCC Survivorship Program.

Another popular book, *Our Best to You!* was also available for sale. The Leever Cancer Center's 10th Anniversary Cookbook features over 200 recipes lovingly put together by over 100 staff, patients and friends. All proceeds go directly to the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program.

Survivors Day was attended by over 50 people who celebrated their status as cancer survivors.

As Kevin Kniery, Executive Director of HLRCC, expressed, "Survivors Day allows us to take a moment to draw strength from one another as we celebrate the gift of life."



Team Leever Takes on the CT Challenge Ride

And Welcomes a New 100-Miler!



The best part of the day: "Finishing!" says Dr. Michael Elser, above, with his wife Sheila.

THE CT CHALLENGE RIDE TOOK PLACE ON JULY 28, 2012, IN WESTPORT, BRINGING TOGETHER 98 TEAMS WHO BICYCLED 10, 25, 50, 75 OR 100 MILES TO RAISE FUNDS FOR CANCER SURVIVORSHIP PROGRAMS.

Thirty-five members of Team Leever, including 10 "century riders" (100-milers), cycled a total of 1,680 miles. The team included nine half-century riders, six 25-milers and eight 10-milers, as well as seven survivors; 11 team members raised over \$1,000 each. This year, Team Leever moved up to the #8 position by \$600. The total amount raised by the CT Challenge 2012 Bike Ride was \$1.6 million.

Dr. Michael Elser, a primary care physician from Naugatuck, was one of the century riders who joined Team Leever for the Challenge. He and his wife Sheila both participated; she rode 50 miles while he completed the 100-mile ride.

Kevin Kniery

Dr. Elser heard about the CT Challenge Ride through his membership in the Triathlon Club in Waterbury. As a triathlete, a physician personally connected to the Leever Cancer Center, and an individual touched by cancer in his family, he felt that it was a worthy goal for him not only to participate but to become a century rider. "I've done some triathlons and group rides with the club," he says, "so I felt I was ready for this challenge." His longest ride before this was about 70 miles.

Dr. Elser advises first-timers to "Go for it! It's worth it. Seeing the survivors was very inspiring – there's a lot of spirit! It's a wonderful charity and foundation."

A Community of Caring

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center wishes to express its appreciation and a sincere thank you to its neighbors and friends by recognizing the spirit and hard work of the members of our community in fulfilling the Mission of the Leever Cancer Center.

The Southbury Softball Team celebrated their first-place tournament win by sending a donation to HLRCC. That's the winning spirit!

Eight-year-old Jake Veillette started Arts for Cancer in August 2010, selling the drawings and paintings he creates and donating the proceeds to HLRCC. As of October 2011, the third-grader had raised over \$400 since starting the fundraising project.

We are grateful to the Gridiron Club at Pomperaug High School for their Thanksgiving donation.

As part of Respiratory Care Week, the Respiratory Care Department at Waterbury Hospital presented a check to the Leever Cancer Center "in thanks for a local community resource that provides wonderful services to family, friends and neighbors."

The Brave at Heart breast cancer support group held a toy drive at their holiday party for the children of Leever Cancer Center patients.

Thanks to the Southwestern
Connecticut Bassmasters who
forwarded the proceeds of their fishing
tournament to the Leever Cancer Center.
We thank the Girl Scout Troop of
Middlebury for making gift bags for
our patients.

The Grove Sisters – Dot Cliford, Mariette Bardelli, Kathy Gillotti, Chris Rivers and Jean Baran – crafted cancer awareness bracelets in loving memory of their mother, Dora Groves, and sent the proceeds to the Leever Cancer Center.

Special thanks to Craig and Clare Carragan for establishing a perpetual fund to support the Reflections Boutique at the Leever Cancer Center.

The Circle of Hope Lymphedema Foundation (COHLF) has generously contributed funds to be used for the purchase of lymphedema garments for patients in need of financial assistance. Thank you to COHLF Founder Jeanne Tassis.

Two fundraisers for the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program were held at the American Legion Hall in Watertown, featuring music by Jay Crawford of the Music Museum on WATR and The Rocking Heartbeats.

The Labella sisters from Watertown made and sold bracelets at Judson School in Watertown, donating the proceeds to the Leever Cancer Center.

Vocalists Bob and Claudia Hughes and accompanist Mark Templeton, known as Let Your Light Shine, held a special performance to entertain patients, staff and visitors at HLRCC.

Thanks to Reach for a Star Hair Design for their generous donation.

A sincere thank you to all the members of the Quilts That Care group, led by Deb Van Steenbergen, who continue to make beautiful quilts for our patients.

Thanks to Eleanor McNaught of Oakville for creating a beautiful hand-crocheted afghan, which was donated to a patient.

Thanks to Dom's Brick House Restaurant for holding a fundraiser to benefit the Leever Cancer Center.

Special thanks to Denis Cables for organizing our first Benefit Car Show, held June 17, 2012. The second annual Benefit Car Show will be held on June 9, 2013.

Kohl's made a generous donation of books and stuffed animals to the Magic Moments Book Club Cart, thanks to the efforts of assistant store manager Dave Hugel.

Waterbury Arts Magnet School's student council provided 65 festive patient goody bags through their Wrap Up Cancer campaign.

Oral Head and Neck

Cancer Screening Findings

As part of National Oral, Head & Neck Cancer Awareness Week, area physicians screened over 70 people for signs of oral, head and neck cancer. The Leever Cancer Center tracks the number of people screened as well as the types of referrals made when the screening is complete. Here are the results of the screenings from 2012 and 2013.

		NUMBER OF REFERRALS			
	NUMBER OF PEOPLE SCREENED	For routine follow-up	For further head and neck evaluation	Suspected malignancies	Other referrals
APRIL 2013	77	58	14	0	5
APRIL 2012	90	82	5	0	17

AWare!

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We encourage your feedback.

If there is a cancer topic you would like covered, to respond to an article you've read, or to be put on our mailing list, please call 203-575-5555 or email: dparkinson@leevercancercenter.org

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The Right Team. Right Here.



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What Causes Cancer?Help us find out.

The HLRCC is partnering with the American Cancer Society for a landmark new research study that hopes to discover better ways to prevent, treat and eventually cure cancer.

Men and women between the ages of 30 and 65 who have never been diagnosed with cancer were invited to take part in the study, titled Cancer Prevention Study-3 (CPS-3).

The study requires a long-term commitment involving completion of follow-up surveys periodically over the next 20 to 30 years.

For more information about CPS-3, visit www.cancer.org/cps3 or call toll-free 1.888.604.5888.

CPS-3 enrollment at HLRCC

Wednesday, June 5 8:30 am - 12:00 pm

Start Your Engines!

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center will host the Second Annual Benefit Car Show on Sunday, June 9 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM in the visitor parking lot of the Leever Cancer Center. Many makes and models of pre-1984 cars will be on display, and there will be entertainment from DJ Brass City Cruisers, awards, raffles and food provided by Frankie's!

There is a donation of \$10 for all show cars, with proceeds to benefit the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program at the Leever Cancer Center. So, gentlemen (and ladies), start your engines and join us for this great event. (Please note: rain date is June 23.)

For more information, contact Denis at 203-592-2528.

Community Events & Monthly Support Groups

GREATER WATERBURY RELAY FOR LIFE: Saturday, June 1 - Sunday, June 2, Crosby High School, Waterbury. Opening ceremonies Saturday, June 1 at 10 AM. Luminaria ceremony Saturday, June 1 at 9 PM

CT CHALLENGE BIKE RIDE: Friday, July 26 and Saturday, July 27, Fairfield County Hunt Club, Westport. Team Leever rides Saturday, July 27

JOURNALING: A WAY TO HEAL FROM YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE:

Fridays, 10 AM - 11:30 AM, contact Melissa Seres, MSW: 203-575-5511

THYROID CANCER SUPPORT GROUP: monthly, last Tuesday, 6 PM – 7 PM, contact Dot Torretta at 203-756-3481

WOMAN TO WOMAN BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP: monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 7 PM – 8:30 PM, contact Theresa Lombardo at 860-274-2200

BRAVE AT HEART BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP: monthly, 1st Wednesday, 7 PM – 9 PM, contact Anne Pringle at 203-910-7582

CT MULTIPLE MYELOMA FIGHTERS SUPPORT GROUP: monthly, 2nd Tuesday, 6 PM – 8 PM, contact Robin Tuohy at 203-206-3536

HOPE MUTUAL AID GROUP FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES: monthly, 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 12 PM – 1 PM, contact Melissa Seres at 203-575-5511

BETTER BREATHING CLUB: monthly, 3rd Friday, 1 PM, contact Rachel Kirchner at 203-757-4991

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY: LOOK GOOD... FEEL BETTER!: monthly, 1st Monday, 2 PM – 4 PM, contact the ACS at 203-756-8888

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY: REACH TO RECOVERY: by appointment, contact the ACS at 203-756-8888

WATERBURY AREA OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP: monthly, 1st Monday, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM, contact John Sickola, 203-729-9623

AMPUTEE SUPPORT GROUP: monthly, 3rd Friday, 5:00 PM, contact Dila Hassiem, 203-597-8818

ART THERAPY: monthly, 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 2:00 PM, contact Melissa Seres, MSW: 203-575-5511

QUILTS THAT CARE: monthly, 1st Monday, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM, contact Deb V: 860-945-0184 COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS: monthly, 2nd Wednesday, 6:45 PM – 10:00 PM, contact Sharon: 860-384-1398

Please call contact person to confirm that group is running as scheduled.

Meeting times may be rescheduled to accommodate holidays or special meetings.

See leevercancercenter.org for ongoing community events.