

Metacancer Web site offers hope, information in memory of young Jewish mother

By Marcia L. Horn
Community Editor

Elizabeth Prostic was a vibrant young Jewish woman when she was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2004. She was 31 when she died on March 31, 2005, just five months after her diagnosis. She left behind her husband, Michael Lundblad, a 9-month-old daughter, Harper, and her parents, Dr. Edward and Merry Prostic of Mission Hills.

Lizzie Prostic had been living in Washington after graduating from George Washington University Law School. But she grew up in the Kansas City area, graduating from Pembroke Hill School.

Now, Prostic's family and friends have created the MetaCancer Foundation and an associated Web site, www.metacancer.org, as a way to honor her memory.

Prostic and her husband found many organizations and Web sites that are type-specific: breast cancer, colon cancer, ovarian cancer, etc. But there was almost nothing, and certainly nothing encouraging, on the Web about metastatic cancer.

Lundblad said that when his wife was first diagnosed, they searched the Internet in vain for support groups and information about metastatic cancer and then became discouraged. Metastatic cancer is defined as cancer that has spread from its original tumor to other parts of the body.

"(Lizzie) and I had talked about starting a Web site that could get some information to people like ourselves, looking for survivor stories and things that would be more supportive and inspirational ... where the only thing you get is (information about) clinical trials," Lundblad said from his home in Charlottesville, Va.

He and other family members discussed an Elizabeth Prostic Foundation that could make a number of different kinds of grants and support awards available at Pembroke Hill, or perhaps an undergraduate scholar-



Elizabeth Prostic, daughter Harper and her husband Michael Lundblad

ship at the University of Pennsylvania, where Prostic earned her bachelor's degree.

"But I thought a better way to honor her would be to have a foundation committed to this issue of metastatic cancer," Lundblad said. He wanted the focus to be on the psychological and emotional side, meeting a need that is sorely lacking.

"We've started a plan and have already done a couple of grants in line with our mission, which is support and inspiration for metastatic cancer survivors and caregivers," Lundblad said.

Ways of helping

Dr. Edward Prostic said cancer patients' caregivers and other family members are often neglected. Thus, the focus of MetaCancer on the psychosocial problems associated with the disease.

"We're just hoping people can have this as a chronic illness until the breakthroughs occur and they can get cures," he said. "That was the goal with Elizabeth; we

knew it wasn't curable by today's technology. We were hoping it could be treated as a chronic illness, but she didn't have enough time."

While some cancer centers and hospitals have support groups that are specifically for metastatic cancer, Lundblad said he is unaware of any other online support group. The MetaCancer Web site, www.metacancer.org, was launched this year on March 31, the first anniversary of Prostic's death. It includes a message board where people can post a topic or just browse, articles about the latest treatment and research, inspirational articles and paintings by local artist Rita Blitt.

"We're trying to offer a range of ways of helping people because the same thing is not going to work for everyone," Lundblad said. "That's what's great about the combination of things we're doing in Kansas City."

One of those projects in Kansas City is funding a new initiative focused on

metastatic and late-stage cancer at Turning Point, The Center for Hope and Healing, 8900 State Line Road, Leawood.

Because this concept is unique to Kansas City, Turning Point dedicated the Elizabeth Anne Prostic Room at its facility Nov. 25.

Turning Point will offer support groups, individual counseling, skills-based classes and various kinds of relaxation meditation techniques.

Merry Prostic learned about Turning

Point shortly after her daughter was diagnosed. Lundblad said she found it "very helpful and comforting and supportive. ... She went there feeling hopeless and had a really good experience with them."

In addition to Turning Point, the MetaCancer Foundation has created the Elizabeth Anne Prostic Resource Room at Truman Medical Center, where a wide range of services will be offered to underprivileged patients and their caregivers.

Lundblad said the conditions under

which people receive chemotherapy at inner-city Truman are much worse than those at KU Medical Center, George Washington University or Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

"At Truman, there are three, four, five people shoved into a small room with one TV, and you often have to sit for (several hours) to get (the drugs) dripped in," he said. "We're trying to help them buy DVD players and CD players, so if they can get more out of watching the latest blockbuster movie than some guided-imagery meditation on cancer, then great."

Likewise, the foundation has given a grant for a computer workstation at Truman. It's targeted particularly at non-English-speaking families so they can use the Internet to do cancer research in other languages.

The computer is also helpful as "diversionary therapy," Dr. Prostic said.


"Anything that can divert these people's minds while they're sitting around waiting (for chemotherapy treatments) is a godsend," Dr. Prostic said.

Local level


Lundblad said the MetaCancer Foundation is implementing a wide range of services in a relatively concentrated area.

"That's an example of doing it at the local level, which I think sort of complements nicely with having an online support group," Lundblad said. "We've got personal connections (and) it just feels right to have a major emphasis on Kansas City because that's where Lizzie grew up."


Donations in Prostic's name after her death enabled her family to establish the MetaCancer Foundation. The Foundation is an exempt charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Anyone who wishes to make a donation can send it to Howard J. Postal, Treasurer, The MetaCancer Foundation, Inc., c/o Santos, Postal & Co., 11 N. Washington Street, Suite 600, Rockville, MD 20850.

"People have been unbelievably generous," Lundblad said. "I've been astounded and really humbled at how generous people have been. Hearing about what happened and what we're trying to do just strikes a chord for people." 


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