

Cancer Awareness

Everyone has a story

Everyone in some way has been touched by Cancer.

Family, friends, co-workers ... even you may come face-to-face with this disease at some point. This publication focuses attention on the many facets this disease touches.

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Covered in prayer

SJN teacher finds support in fighting breast cancer

Tammy Cheek
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St. John Neumann learning lab coordinator and volleyball coach Michelle Dougherty has been fighting against cancer and winning.

After being diagnosed in 2018 with breast cancer, she went through chemotherapy and removal of the tumor.

“Right now, there’s no evidence of disease, so we hope to keep it that way.

“They prayed me through it, for sure, continued to pray me through all of this,” she said about her family, as well as the faculty, staff and students of SJN. “I wouldn’t have been able to probably get through all of the treatments had I not been here.”

Likewise, Dougherty has received needed support from Knoxville Catholic High School and the K2 volleyball community.

“I’ve been coaching volleyball almost as long as I have been teaching,” she said. “I’ve been an assistant coach at KCHS for the past 14 years. I’ve been coaching club ball at K2 since they opened their doors in 2009.

“Brent Carter, Chris and J. Hames and all coaches and the player families supported me through treatment as well,” Dougherty said. “To say I was covered in prayer is an understatement.”

She received cancer-free news in April 2019, when the tumor was removed.

“I feel good,” Dougherty said. “I feel very grateful.”

However, “I still go once a month for shots and blood work, but my shots will end in December,” she said. “I’ll still be on medication for another seven years or so, and I get annual screenings and other things that the ATM Mutation (that she learned she had) carries



Photo submitted

Michelle Dougherty is pictured with SJN middle school girls before her surgery in 2019.

ries along with it, like I have a higher risk of pancreatic cancer, so I added another doctor to the team.

“And, I have a GI doctor who monitors my pancreas because there’s nothing that can be done to prevent, at this time, pancreatic cancer, other than screening,” Dougherty added.

This is her 22nd year at SJN; although, it is her 30th year in education, as she taught for

eight years in Alabama before joining SJN.

At SJN, Dougherty now does intervention for students in pre-kindergarten through the eighth grade. Before that, she was a kindergarten teacher.

“It was funny, the school year before I was diagnosed, I was teaching kindergarten (at SJN),” she said. “The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways.

“That summer, the principal at the time asked me to take on this job (as coordinator) in the learning lab,” Dougherty said. “I loved kindergarten and I wasn’t sure about making this move, but I think that was the Holy Spirit putting me in the right place because it would have been really hard to do teaching in a classroom the

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Delivering happiness to sick children

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KNOXVILLE — Starlight Children’s Foundation is delivering happiness to seriously ill children and their families at East Tennessee Children’s Hospital in Knoxville.

“(Starlight) allows us to purchase these gaming systems for our patients,” said Lauren Birdwell, marketing and communications manager with East Tennessee Children’s Hospital. “So we have over 20 gaming systems here at the hospital that we purchased from Starlight.

“They do everything from distracting kids — it can be scary and hard when you are waiting for an answer or a procedure at the hospital — to helping get kids motivated to move if we need a child to walk



Photo submitted

A young patient enjoys playing a game with his mother while he is treated at East Tennessee Children’s Hospital.

...” she added.

“We’ve had these gaming systems for more than 30 years,” Birdwell said. “This year, we ordered two more ma-

chines.

“That’s how popular they are and how helpful they are

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Help in the fight with Taste of CARES

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Farragut residents will have an opportunity to meet an Olympic Gold medalist this winter while helping in the fight against cancer by attending a “Taste of CARES fundraiser wine dinner featuring Scott Hamilton in support of the Scott Hamilton Cancer Alliance for Research Education and Survivorship (CARES) foundation.

The event, which is open to the public, is slated for 6 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, in Fox Den Country Club, 12284 N. Fox Den Drive.

That’s when the country club will transform into a “haven for food and wine lovers, philanthropists and anyone touched by cancer,” said Anne Schley, development director for Scott Hamilton CARES Foundation. “The event, Taste of CARES, will be hosted in partnership with the Wine Society of East Tennessee and promises a carefully curated

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LCUB encourages women everywhere to know the signs and symptoms of breast cancer, get regular screenings and seek help early.

We pray for everyone who has lost a loved one or for those who are currently going through treatment, and we celebrate those whose lives have been saved.

Find out how you can get involved by visiting
wearitpink.org





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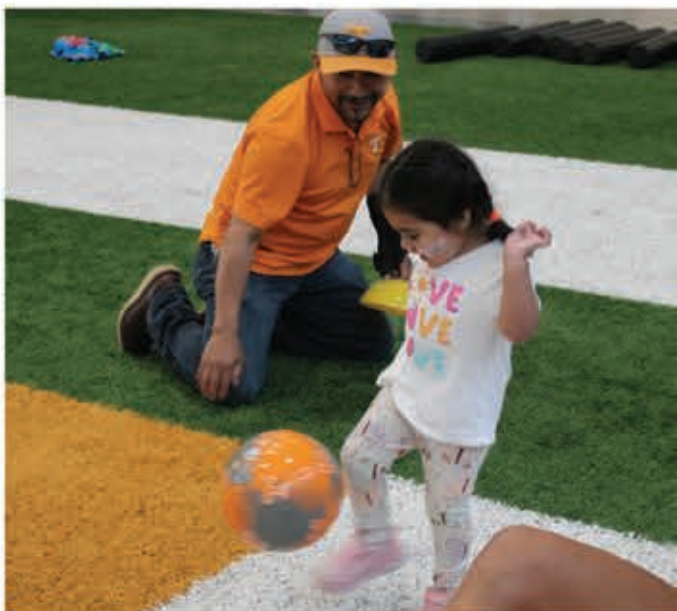
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Volleyball Pink Out

KCHS supports breast cancer awareness with annual game; this year's opponent was FHS

Rachel Totten
Correspondent

Since 2018, the Girls' Volleyball team at Knoxville Catholic High School has made it their mission to support breast cancer awareness. Each fall the team, led by head coach Brent Carter, hosts a "Pink Out" to raise funds for the local charity, Breast Connect.

"In the volleyball world, breast cancer awareness is a huge, huge part of what we do, both on the club level and at the school level," Carter explained. "And with October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we aim to schedule a match every year where we tape the lines pink and everybody – even the referees – dresses in pink."

This year's event took place Monday, Sept. 22, during a match against Farragut High School at KCHS. Carter said about \$1,000 likely was raised through donations, ticket proceeds and a bake sale. These funds will help Breast Connect provide care packages for women undergoing breast cancer treatment.

"We're still getting the totals, but it's over \$1,000," he said. "Last year was just over \$1,000 as well, and that provided more than 40 comfort care packages. So it's pretty awesome."

While breast cancer awareness is an important element of volleyball, the annual Pink Out events are a bit more personal for the Lady Irish.

"We started holding these events when our assistant coach, Michelle Dougherty, was diagnosed with breast cancer," said Carter, noting that FHS Girls' Volleyball Coach Andre Alvez, who previously served at KCHS, also helped spearhead the initiative. "This is all in recognition of Dougherty's battle and her coming through the other side of that."

For Dougherty, the KCHS Pink Out event is "super emotional."

"It's a huge outpouring of love from the players and their families," she said. "There is a lot of love and support in the volleyball community."

Learn more about Dougherty's story beginning on page 1C of this section.

Anyone interested in supporting KCHS' breast cancer awareness initiative can send donations to the Knoxville Catholic High School Volleyball Program.

"Just denote in the memo section that it's for the Pink Out and Breast Connect," Carter said. "We try to do everything we can to help—it just makes a big difference."

Learn more about Breast Connect at breastconnect.org



Top photo submitted;
Game photos by Tony Christen



We honor those who fought cancer and celebrate the survivors.



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Pink Out

On Oct. 3, Farragut High School students proudly showed their support for Breast Cancer Awareness with the annual PINK OUT, held during the highly anticipated football game between Farragut and Hardin Valley Academy. The night was not only a victory on the field — with the Admirals securing a win — but also a powerful show of unity and compassion off the field.

One of the night's most moving moments was the continuation of a beloved tradition: students shaving their heads in solidarity with those battling cancer. Now in its 7th year, the tradition saw seven brave students step forward, cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd, making the event even more meaningful.

Farragut High School once again proved that when it comes to supporting a cause, its students lead with heart, courage, and Admiral pride.



Photos by Tony Cox



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Photos submitted

Top: Dougherty gathered with SJN Teachers before Chemo in Nov. 2018
Above: Michelle Dougherty speaking in 2019
Left: Dougherty coaching in 2025

Prayer
From page 1C

whole entire time.

“So, the job made it a whole lot easier to be able to go in for my treatments without disrupting the students’ day or disrupting the whole school,” she said.

Dougherty learned about the cancer Oct. 5, 2018.

“I found out, oddly enough through a Facebook image that was showing different signs of potential breast cancer,” she recalled. “One of the pictures was of an indentation or a dimple. I was like ‘huh. I think I have that.’

“So, I did what any girl does; I went to my mother,” the teacher said. “My mother said, ‘Yeah, I think you need to go have that looked at.’

“My doctor sent me down three sets of stairs to Parkwest Breast Center, and they said, ‘Yep, there’s something here,’” Dougherty related.

Before that October, her last mammogram was in January 2018.

“They didn’t see anything in my film in January, but by the time October rolled around, I had a 3 ½-centimeter tumor,” she recalled.

So, “shock” was her first reaction since there was no history of breast cancer in her family.

“When I told my mom, she was like ‘No, that can’t be right,’” Dougherty related.

“When we went from Parkwest Breast Center, they sent me to a surgeon, Dr. William Gibson, who brought my case up to a cancer board,” she said. “My mom went to the appointment with me, and (the board) said, ‘chemo, an oncologist, we’re going that route first because of the size and type of tumor it was.’

She learned “I’m triple positive, some Her2 positive and hormone positive — I’m just a very positive person,” Dougherty said. “Because of (the positive results) and the size of the tumor, they said chemo first. And, my mom was going ‘Chemo?’

“They asked, ‘Do you have an oncologist?’ And, I’m like, ‘No! Who has an oncologist on speed dial?’ So, they sent me to (oncologist) Dr. Daniel Ibach, and from there, we attacked the tumor with all we had,” she said.

“So, the standard of treatment was six rounds of chemo every three weeks, followed by 18 rounds of targeted therapy and all kinds of different medications and shots since then and the removal of the tumor, which was April 4, 2019,” Dougherty said.

“Through this process, we found out that I do have a gene that probably is the reason for the tumor and why it grew so fast,” she said. “I don’t have Braca; I have the ATM (ataxia-telangiectasia mutated) genetic mutation (inherited genetic changes that increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer, including breast cancer), which is not a money machine, sadly.

“I have three sisters who were all tested for the gene,” Dougherty said. “Two of my sisters have the gene. One sister does not. The one sister, Katie, who does not have the gene was diagnosed with breast cancer in May (of this year).

“She has the same type of tumor as I do; (but) luckily for her, they caught it really early,” she said. “Her tumor was really small.

“(Katie) finished surgery,” Dougherty said. “She has five more rounds of radiation, and she is in a drug trial through

Emory that she’ll do for another year.”

With what Dougherty has been dealing, she then had concerns about Katie, “especially since she was the one sister who didn’t have the gene. Her doctor said she’s an anomaly,” Dougherty said.

“My other two sisters get bonus screenings because of all this. They get to go every six months (to be screened) or every year for either MRIs or mammograms,” she added.

“I just pray that my sisters who have the gene that I’ll take (the cancer) if they can not have it,” Dougherty said. “I pray that Katie gets a clear bill of health and that my other siblings don’t have to go through this, too. That’s just my big prayer and my big wish.”

Throughout the ordeal, she has had the support of everyone around her.

“This school has been very supportive,” Dougherty said. “The family of St. John Neumann really embraced me and supported me. Right before I started chemo, we did an after all-school mass. I got to celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick, and all the students were a part of it.

“They were very kind when I wasn’t able to be (at school) after chemo,” she said. “The first round (of chemo), I was here because I’m bull-headed — probably shouldn’t have been here — but I was like, ‘Nope, I can do this.’

“But as the rounds went on, it took me a little longer to feel like myself again,” Dougherty said. “But, the teachers and the staff really rallied, and any duties that I had or students I needed to see, everybody kind of picked up what I couldn’t do and made sure things got done.”



File photos

Above: Mom Jill Jabatoy helps Jacqueline Jabatoy, 13

Right: Elena Lemmons and Jennifer Lemmons



Locks of Love
An annual tradition in conjunction with Catholic Schools Week

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Before St. John Neumann Catholic School learning lab coordinator Michelle Dougherty was diagnosed in 2018 with breast cancer, her experience regarding cancer began about 15 years ago, when the school started participating in Locks of Love as part of Catholic Schools Week.

In 2010, “we were thinking of ways that the students could serve or give back to the community without having the parents doing it for them,” she said. “It didn’t require a financial obligation or a purchase the parents had to make.

“It was a service project that the kids were able to do solely on their own,” Dougherty added.

The teachers found Locks for Love is a non-profit charity that provides custom-made hair prosthetics (wigs) or hairpieces to children under 21 who have lost their hair because of medical conditions, such as cancer treatments, alopecia or burns. Each year, Dougherty said Locks of Love has grown and has become an annual tradition.

After Dougherty’s diagnosis, “I think I really understood what it was like for the people receiving their hair (from the donations, the wigs, from Locks of Love) more than I did (before the diagnosis), more of an appreciation, because I think that was one of the hardest things was to lose my hair, which I did. Probably around my second chemo treatment is when my hair started falling out in a big way.

“The folks who come and join us for the hair donation day, Belleza Salon, I went to them and one of their stylists gave me a buzz cut,” she recalled. “She cut it really short for me.

“Then, when it started falling out a lot (more), I went back and she shaved it for me,” Dougherty said. “I think the hardest part was (before losing her hair) I could go about my day and nobody looking at me knew I had cancer, but as soon as I lost my hair, people knew.

“I think that makes it a little harder once you have that visible sign of something’s not right or something is different or you’re sick,” she said.

But, “that year, when I was going through treatment and was bald, my sister Marybeth came up, surprised me and she donated her hair, so that was a lot of fun,” Dougherty said. “I was touched because she lives in Mississippi, so that wasn’t like an easy commute.”

In fact, “through this process, besides my parents, every single one of my (four) siblings came and sat with me during a chemo treatment,” she said. “When they say, ‘Nobody fights alone,’ that is totally true.”

Locks of Love will take place again this year at SJN around 1:15 to 1:30 p.m., Jan. 29, in conjunction with Catholic Schools Week, unless it snows.

“We usually have around 12 to 15 students, teachers and parents,” Dougherty said.

“We had one dad one year donate,” she said. “He had a good donation going.”

Cancer Impacts Everyone

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MICHAEL G. BAKER

President

The basics of breast cancer

Breast cancer is a formidable disease affecting millions of individuals each year. Data from the World Health Organization indicates 2.3 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2022, when it was the most common form of the disease in 157 of 185 countries across the globe.

The impact of breast cancer goes beyond those diagnosed with the disease, affecting friends, family members, professional colleagues and others as well. That far-reaching impact means everyone has a vested interest in learning about breast cancer.

What is breast cancer?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast grow out of control. The breast is made up of three main parts known as the lobules, ducts and connective tissue, and which type of breast cancer a person has depends on which cells in the breast turn into cancer.

Is there a typical breast cancer?

No two individuals diagnosed with breast cancer will have the same experience after being diagnosed. However, the CDC notes that most breast cancers begin in the ducts or lobules. The ducts are tubes that carry milk to the nipple and the lobules are the glands that produce milk.

What are some common risk factors for breast cancer?

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. notes gender is the foremost risk factor for breast cancer, as the WHO reports that 99 percent of breast cancers occur in women. Additional risk factors for breast cancer include age, with two out of three women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer being older than 55, and race, as the disease affects more Caucasian women than women of other races. The NBCF also notes women who have dense breast tissue may be at greater

risk for breast cancer because such tissue can make it harder to detect lumps.

What causes breast cancer?

The NBCF notes most women who have breast cancer will never be able to identify an exact cause behind their disease. Common risk factors like gender and age are beyond women's control, but there are some controllable risk factors that can be avoided. The WHO notes overconsumption of alcohol and tobacco use are two such factors.

How important is early detection?

American Cancer Society reports the five-year survival rate for breast cancers discovered in the localized stage is 99 percent. That underscores the significance of early detection. The NBCF notes monthly breast self-exams and routine clinical exams increase the likelihood of early detection. Women are urged to speak



with their physicians regarding how frequently they should be tested, as recommendations vary depending on each individual and their respective family histories.

The basics of breast cancer provide insight into the disease and what women can do to reduce their risk of developing it.

CARES

From page 1C

multi-course dinner with each course paired to perfection with wines from acclaimed producers, such as Memento Mori, Bacigalupi Vineyards and The Donum Estate.

“The highlight of the evening will be Scott Hamilton’s keynote address,” Schley said. “Known for his charisma and infectious optimism, Hamilton will share stories from his career as the world’s most recognized figure skating star and his journey through personal loss and cancer survivorship.

“His words promise to move, motivate and remind us all why this work matters,” she added.

“Enjoy hand-picked wines, delicious bites and a chance to make a real difference in the fight against cancer — all in one relaxed, joyful setting...” Schley said. “It’s the perfect blend of community, cause, and celebration.

“Scott Hamilton used to do a lot of skating-related events in Knoxville and has an affiliation with the proton center there,” said Schley, who added this may be the first time Hamilton has held an event in Farragut.

Tickets are \$250 per person. To purchase tickets, visit online at <https://scottcares.app.neoncrm.com/nx/portal/neonevents/events?path=%2Fportal%2Fevents%2F23521>

Schley said proceeds from the event will benefit the Scott

Hamilton CARES Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit “dedicated to advancing patient-centered, targeted treatments that fight cancer while preserving quality of life.

“Hamilton’s journey from Olympic champion to cancer survivor inspired him to found the Scott Hamilton CARES Foundation in 2014,” Schley said. “By partnering with leading hospitals, research centers and nonprofits across the country, the foundation aims to close critical gaps in knowledge, funding and access for next-generation cancer treatments.

“I see a day where everyone survives cancer,” Hamilton said. “A day when no one suffers their way through their treatments. A day cancer does no harm. Only through the research can we unlock the keys to a much brighter future - a future celebrating survivors.”

Even before the foundation was created, it was part of a CARES initiative on which he was working before with Cleveland Clinic, one of the most prominent cancer centers in America, Schley said.

The mandate of the Scott Hamilton CARES Foundation is, with the money it receives, to work with a scientific advisory committee, which in turn, identifies and gives grants to scientists to fund their cancer research.

“We’ve taken small amounts of money and achieved massive amounts of results,” she added. “Up until now, it’s been

110 research studies we have funded.

“The upcoming wine dinner is an opportunity for Knoxville to honor those we’ve lost, support those still fighting and accelerate the search for a cure,” Schley said. “Every glass raised and every dollar donated will help ensure that the next generation faces fewer obstacles and more hope through groundbreaking cancer research.”

Hamilton, not only an Olympic Gold medalist, is a best-selling author and three-time cancer survivor who founded the Scott Hamilton CARES Foundation.

“Hamilton’s commitment to cancer research is deeply personal,” Schley shared. “As a teenager, he lost his mother Dorothy, his greatest champion, to breast cancer.

“The pain of that loss became the driving force of his career and, later, his advocacy.

When his mother died, Hamilton decided to take skating seriously.

And, “he took all that motivation and won the Olympics, won the national championship four times.” Schley said. “He decided it was going to be his life’s mission and goal to fight cancer.”

“My mom was the center of my universe,” Hamilton recalled. “I figured out that I didn’t have to do anything without her. I carried her with me every day.”

His own life soon echoed his mother’s.



Scott Hamilton

“In 1997, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer,” Schley said. “He faced the disease with the same determination that defined his athletic career, beating it back only to be confronted by recurring brain tumors in 2004, 2010 and 2016.

“Each time, Hamilton refused to give in and channeled his experience into action and advocacy,” Schley said.

For more information, contact Schley at 615-579-2899 or anne.schley@scottcares.org

Starlight

From page 1C

in a clinical setting, so we continue to see these not only as a resource for our patients to have fun here — we want our patients to have fun and have joy when they’re here, even during a scary procedure or maybe a hard time — but we also see the value of a child having the opportunity to be a child, and (Starlight is) getting to help us with that.

“We actually have these (gaming systems) all throughout our hospital,” she said. “So, anything from a patient having surgeries to a patient waiting for a cardiology appointment to a patient that is going to be with us for several days or even a week, we have a number of these machines to have enough to go around. “That’s how important we think they are,” Birdwell said. But, “We want more than we have today.”

For someone wanting to donate funds to purchase a gaming system for the hospital, the system costs \$5,000.

“I think one of the really beautiful and unique things about East Tennessee Children’s Hospital is we’re not just a hospital; we are caring

for kids,” she said.

“They may have these complex illnesses and they may need to be in the hospital for days and days in a row,” Birdwell said. “And, waiting for any child is hard, especially for a child that’s maybe going to have a have a shot or maybe going to have to get blood drawn or maybe go under anesthesia.

“Anything we can do to alleviate that child’s anxiety, make their stay fun and happy ... that is our goal,” she said.

But, “of course, our No. 1 goal is caring for the child, giving (him or her) excellent clinical care, but we want it to be fun,” Birdwell added. “We want them to have a good day when they are here at Children’s Hospital.

“It is so fun to watch these kids on these kids on these gaming systems,” she added. “Being a child, we’ve really been trying to get them to walk or trying to get them out of bed, they just don’t feel good. But then, I go back to the floor and I see them walking because they are playing this video game and just the joy on their faces, just getting an opportunity to be a child, not only healing but getting to have some fun as well, it’s one of the best and rewarding

parts of the job.

“We care not only about their health and their safety, we also care about their emotional well-being, their joy, their fun, all the things that are part of being a child,” Birdwell said. “We want to make more moments like that for each child. “It’s really indescribable to see a child coming to the hospital ... getting an opportunity to do something fun, have their mood totally change.”

Still, Starlight also provides more than gaming systems.

“(Starlight Children’s Foundation) provides everything from hospital gowns to our patients to bringing in celebrity visitors,” Birdwell said. “Starlight brought in Blue Clues actors and they did an entire hospital clue search with our patients and were just so kind.”

“Founded in 1982, Starlight Children’s Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that aims to deliver happiness to seriously ill children and their families through vital programs that impact millions of kids annually,” a press release stated. “Donor-funded and offered free of charge to hospitals and families, Starlight programs unleash the power of play, empowering kids with a renewed

sense of optimism, resilience and courage.

“Starlight is a top-rated charity committed to the equitable allocation of programs to its nationwide hospital network,” the press release added. “Healing begins with happiness.”

“Their entire mission is to make children feel less lonely and scared in hospitals,” Birdwell said. “They work with all children’s hospitals throughout the U.S.

“They provide kid-friendly things like hospital gowns with kittens and puppies on them,” she said. “They also provide things to help educate our patients. For example, they provide LEGO sets that look similar to MRIs, so patients can see what it will be like when they are in one of these machines.”

ETCH, founded in 1937, serves 130,000 patients annually. Of those, it served 1,520 hematology/oncology patients last year, totaling 7,730 visits.

“I think it’s really important to know that we don’t just serve children in East Tennessee,” Birdwell said. “We serve children not only throughout the region, throughout the state, but also we serve children throughout the U.S.

“Although we are a regional children’s hospital, we have

35-plus specialties that can take care of really medically complex children,” she said. “We treat a range from genetic conditions to our cardiology team ... to our specialty clinics, like our Grow With Me Clinic for NAS babies ... we want to make sure they are meeting those milestones (the first five years of their lives).

“We really do care about these patients,” Birdwell added. “From the patients coming for a well check to the patients that’s medically complex.”

Regarding the cost of opening its doors every day, Birdwell said, “People are just astonished to know that it costs us over a million dollars.

“So from a donation perspective, we appreciate the support of the community, and we really could not open our doors without donor support,” she said.

To donate to ETCH, visit www.etch.com/donate

Typically, Birdwell said all donations are put into the areas of greatest need, but “if you have something specific you want your money to go toward, you can earmark by putting (for what you want to earmark) in the notes.”

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