

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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Photos submitted

A Second Chance

Stacey Bussell's journey through breast cancer and recovery

~ Story submitted by Covenant Health

After a breast cancer diagnosis, Stacey Bussell found strength in her faith, family and care team at Covenant Health's Thompson Cancer Survival Center. Today, she is preparing for a future helping others as a pediatric oncology nurse. .

A life-changing Discovery

When Stacey discovered a lump during a self-breast exam in 2023, her life changed dramatically. The lump appeared just nine months after a mammogram, reinforcing the importance of paying attention to changes in your body between routine screenings.

"I have cancer? I have cancer. I have cancer," Stacey said. "It was a lot of unknowns and no answers." At 42 years old, Stacey was diagnosed with micropapillary breast carcinoma.

As she came to terms with her di-

agnosis, her faith became a source of strength. "God, you're going with me on this journey. I do not know how to navigate this," she said.

Finding Support Every Step of the Way

One of the first people to help guide Stacey through her diagnosis was oncology nurse navigator Susan Rutherford. As a nurse navigator, Susan helps patients understand their diagnosis, coordinate care and navigate the often-complex cancer treatment process.

"Nurse Susan has been my angel throughout this whole process. Literally heaven-sent," Stacey said.

Susan remembered their early conversations: "We talked about positivity, and she maintained that, even when it was hard."

During her treatment, Stacey under-

See **SECOND CHANCE** on Page 2C

Breast Connect

Creating a comforting community

~ Story by Rachel Totten

In 2014, a group of breast cancer patients and survivors from across Knoxville came together to create a comforting community of compassion and support. That group, formerly nicknamed the Happy Hour for a Cure, quickly took off, blossoming into the local organization now known as Breast Connect.

Its foundation, however, remains unchanged: Survivors helping survivors.

"We believe that no one should face a breast cancer diagnosis alone," explained Stephanie Ewers, director of programs for Breast Connect. "Through survivor-led programs, mentorship and a deeply supportive community, we walk alongside patients and their families from diagnosis through survivorship... We're all here for each other."

Aimed at empowering breast cancer patients to

become their own best advocates, Breast Connect offers a wide range of programs and services designed to improve quality of life and build community. The organization's Sisterhood initiative, for example, matches newly diagnosed patients with breast cancer survivors, providing comfort and reassurance to those who need it most.

"Our Sisterhood program is central to the mission of Breast Connect," said Ewers, noting that the organization analyzes specific criteria to ensure the best match possible. "We collect information from both the patient and survivor, such as the type of breast cancer, surgeries, treatment plans and family details. This provides those affected by breast cancer with access to someone who has al-

See **CONNECT** on Page 4C

Strengthening those impacted by cancer

~ Story by Rachel Totten

Since its inception in 1990, Cancer Support Community East Tennessee has remained committed to its mission of uplifting and strengthening those impacted by cancer. The organization, located at 6204 Baum Drive, strives to improve the quality of life of individuals across 26 East Tennessee counties by providing support, fostering compassion and breaking down barriers to care throughout the cancer journey.

After all, the whole point is to create a local community for those affected by cancer at every stage.

"Our name says it all: Cancer: Support. Community. That is who we are and what we provide," explained Lori Friel, CSCET's development and community manager. "We focus on reducing stress, supporting physical, emotional and social well-being, and helping to connect participants with others who share the experience of cancer."

This is accomplished through a variety of thoughtfully designed programs, ranging from support groups and individual sessions, wellness and exercise classes, educational workshops and event



art courses. Friel said that virtual support services are also available for those unable to attend in-person programs.

"We offer many programs as hybrid events to allow someone outside the area or who has a compromised immune system to participate," she said.

All programs are led by pro-

fessional psychologists and licensed clinical social workers and are provided at no charge to anyone with cancer, as well as their caregivers and loved ones.

"This includes the wig and accessories room," Friel noted.

To provide these invaluable

See **STRENGTH** on Page 4C

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



From Patient to Proton Ambassador

Meet Walter “Wally” Davis

~ Story submitted by Covenant Health

At just 9 years old, brain cancer survivor Walter Davis, known to many as “Wally,” is stepping into a new role as a Proton Ambassador at Covenant Health Proton Center. As the youngest ambassador in the program’s history, Wally hopes to use his experience to encourage other children and families facing cancer.

A Life-Changing Diagnosis

Wally was diagnosed with medulloblastoma, a rare form of brain cancer, when he was just seven years old. Following brain surgery, he began treatment that included proton therapy and chemotherapy. Over six weeks, he completed approximately 31 proton therapy treatments at Covenant Health Proton Center and later underwent six months of inpatient high-dose chemotherapy. Along the way, he also required several transfusions and additional hospital admissions.

Throughout treatment, Wally leaned on his faith, family and the support of those around him.

“His strong faith and family support helped him a lot,” said his mother, Smita Davis “His sister Emmy was with him through most of treatment since it was summer break. Both of them share an unbreakable bond and her company kept him buoyant!”

Wally also formed meaningful friendships with members of his care team and others he met during treatment.

Smita Davis also mentioned, “Walter made a connection with all of his nurses (both from the proton center and Dolly Parton Children’s Hospital). Also, a retired air force pilot Woody and his wife made friends with him. They chatted every day after treatment and Walter waited eagerly for those shared moments prior to

setting off chemotherapy at the children’s hospital.”

Looking Ahead

Today, Wally is in remission and focused on recovery. He enjoys swimming, martial arts and playing chess. He is homeschooled with his sister, participates in a weekly co-op, attends church and continues therapy as part of his recovery.

Wally has also begun giving back by helping to raise for organizations that support pediatric cancer research. As he continues to regain his strength, he remains focused on his faith, family and the future.

Becoming the Youngest Proton Ambassador

When asked why he wanted to become an ambassador, Wally shared that he “wants to inspire people to be brave and to have faith in God to carry them through and not only rely on their own strength.”

Helping other children facing cancer is especially important to him.

“Walter doesn’t want other kids to suffer but to have trust that God will be with them through everything”, said Smita Davis.

As a Proton Ambassador, Wally hopes to make new friends, pray for them, listen to them and talk with them. He also hopes to share lessons from his treatment and recovery with others.

When asked what he would say to a child having a difficult day during treatment, Wally’s answer reflected the perspective he gained through his own journey:

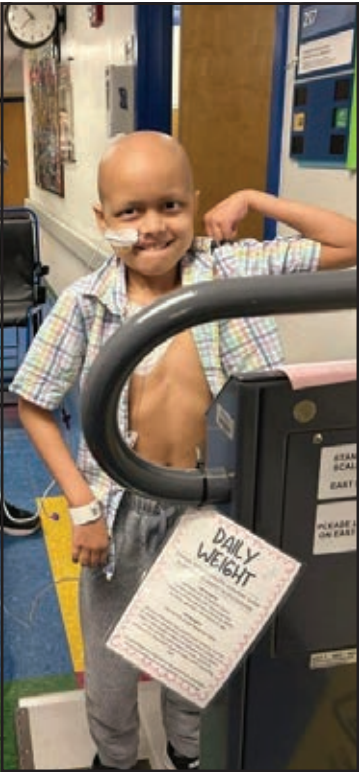
“I would give them a hug, tell them not to give up and trust that God will help them through the day. I would want to share my experiences and current recovery.”

Proton Therapy at Covenant Health

Today, Wally is using his ex-



Photos submitted



perience to encourage other children and families facing cancer. As the youngest Proton Ambassador in the program’s history, he hopes to offer the same support, understanding and encouragement that helped him throughout his

own journey.

His story reflects the impact compassionate, specialized cancer care can have on patients and families. Through services like proton therapy, Covenant Health Proton Center helps patients receive

advanced treatment close to home while supporting them throughout every stage of care.

Learn more about proton therapy and the services available through the Covenant Health Proton Center.

Second Chance

From page 1C

went chemotherapy, a double mastectomy, radiation therapy and oral chemotherapy. Along the way, she learned that recovery involved more than physical healing. “You essentially have to grieve the person that you are because you are not going to come out the same,” she said.

Strength in Family and Faith

Throughout treatment, Stacey drew strength from her parents, extended family and church community. One of the most meaningful moments came when her mother, Karen Bussell, shaved her own head in support after Stacey began losing her hair during chemotherapy. Stacey initially tried to talk her out of it, but Karen

was determined to stand beside her through every step of treatment.

“My hair on the floor. Her hair on the floor. We walked out hand in hand,” Karen recalled.

Her father, James Bussell, credits her perseverance to one thing above all else: “Her faith.”

Care That Sees the Person Behind the Diagnosis

Before beginning treatment, Stacey had one simple prayer.

“I prayed my cancer team would treat me as a patient, not a number. That’s exactly what I got here,” she said.

“I had people who saw me and heard me. I felt validated. I felt seen being here.”

The relationships she built with her care team at Thompson Cancer Survival Center helped her feel supported

throughout every stage of treatment.

A New Calling Inspired by Care

Cancer changed many aspects of Stacey’s life, including her plans for the future, and ultimately inspired a new calling.

Before her diagnosis, nursing was never on her radar. In fact, when treatment began, she was terrified of needles. “The needles are not for me,” she remembered thinking. As she moved through her cancer journey and experienced the compassion of her care team, she found herself drawn to a profession she once never considered.

“They treated me like family,” she said. “The love and care they showed me made such a difference.”

Inspired by the nurses, phy-

sicians and caregivers who supported her throughout her cancer journey, Stacey discovered a new path.

“I want to be a pediatric oncology nurse. I want to work with kids who have cancer,” she said.

Breast nurse navigator Susan believes Stacey’s personal experience will make her a remarkable nurse.

“She’ll be able to tell patients, ‘I have been where you are. I know you’re scared. I’m here to be with you, and I’m going to help you through this,’” she said.

In the future, Stacey hopes to provide the same comfort, reassurance and compassion that helped carry her through treatment, using her own experience to support children and families facing cancer.

Looking Ahead with Gratitude

Today, Stacey is focused on a future shaped by service to others and gratitude for the people who helped her reach this point.

“I’m here. I’m alive. I’m grateful,” she said.

As she looks ahead, she hopes others will learn from her experience. She encourages people to stay current on recommended screenings, perform regular self-breast exams and trust their instincts when something feels different.

If you notice a change or are due for a screening, don’t wait to talk with your healthcare provider. Early detection can make a lifesaving difference.

If you’re due for your annual mammogram, you can schedule it online with a Covenant Health Breast Center near you.



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Strength

From page 1C

services, CSCET hosts two major fundraising events each year: the Good Vibrations benefit concert in the summer and the Celebrating the Art of Survivorship fall luncheon and silent auction. This year’s luncheon, which will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oct. 21 at Bridgewater Place, will feature local comedian and cancer survivor Karen Mills, who will share how she leveraged laughter to get through difficult times.

“This signature event brings together community leaders, survivors, caregivers and supporters to celebrate resilience while raising essential funding to ensure our services remain available at no cost to those who need them,” said Friel. “We look forward to celebrating on October 21, 2026, and sharing another meaningful afternoon of hope, inspiration and survivorship.”

As the only nonprofit cancer support organization with a physical location in Knoxville, CSCET served 570 individuals in 2025 alone, recording the highest participation rate in the organization’s 36-year history, with about 7,000 people attending both in-person and online programs.

Connect

From page 1C

ready been through a similar situation.”

Heart-to-Heart Care Packages are also available for patients in Tennessee who are undergoing chemotherapy or radiation. Ewers said that these care packages contain a heart-shaped heating pillow, warm socks, a journal and other essential items to ease the treatment process.

“Thoughtfully created by sister survivors who have been through treatment themselves, each package is filled with comforting and practical items chosen to make treatment days a little easier—and to remind you that you are cared for, supported and never alone,” she said.

Because “every woman deserves to feel cared for during recovery,” flower deliveries are also provided for patients who have undergone surgery, Ewers said.

“More than just flowers, each bouquet is a simple gesture with a heartfelt message from sister survivors who understand the journey,” she said. “We want to remind

you that you are supported and Breast Connect is thinking of you.”

Ewers emphasized that these community-focused programs have assisted thousands of individuals through their breast cancer journey, filling the gap between medical treatment and personal support in East Tennessee.

“While doctors focus on clinical care, we focus on the human experience,” she said. “Our impact is seen in the confidence our members gain when they learn to advocate for themselves, in the lifelong bonds created through our Sisterhood mentorships and in the peace of mind knowing a local community is wrapping its arms around them. We’ve transformed how local women experience treatment, moving them from feeling overwhelmed and isolated to feeling connected, empowered and supported every step of the way.”

For more information about Breast Connect, visit breast-connect.org or facebook.com/breastconnect.



Photo submitted

Profile: Euphoric Cheese Shop

Sharing experiences, creating connections

For Euphoric Cheese Shop owners Cheri and Amy, their business is about more than cheese.

When the friends opened Euphoric, Amy had just recovered from surgery for breast cancer, and Cheri was diagnosed with breast cancer six weeks after opening. As they navigated their journeys, they chose to share their experiences, creating connections within their community.

“It led to meaningful conversations,” Amy says. “And we were touched by how many people supported us and shared their own stories.”

They opened Sparrow Wine Bar in 2023 and have watched their businesses become a gathering place.

“It’s not just about cheese and wine,” Cheri says. “It’s about people—having something to gather around and a place to gather.”

Today, Cheri and Amy are celebrating five and six years cancer-free, respectively.

“Our mission is to love everyone who walks through the door,” Amy adds. “If we can encourage someone, that’s what it’s about.”



Profile: UT Medical

Breast Health Outreach Program provides access to mammograms

UT Medical’s nationally accredited breast cancer program provides coordinated, state-of-the-art care to our patients. One way we do this is through our unique, grant-funded Breast Health Outreach Program.

The Breast Health Outreach Program gives women across our region easy access to screening mammograms via our state-of-the-art mobile mammography unit (MMU). The mobile unit operates six days a week, offering screening services to both insured and uninsured women. Providing screenings where women work, live and worship removes barriers that often prevent women from being screened. Those barriers can include getting time off from work, finding childcare and getting transportation. The MMU supports UT Medical’s outreach goals by providing access to life-saving breast cancer screenings in 21 East Tennessee counties.

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<https://www.utmedical.org/mobile-mammography-unit-locations-and-appointments>





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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

More Than Cheese

How two friends, two breast cancer journeys, and a shared dream created a community around the table

For Euphoric Cheese Shop owners and best friends Cheri and Amy, breast cancer is part of the story they never expected to tell — but it became part of the story God was writing for them.

When the two opened Euphoric in 2021, Amy had just come through surgery for breast cancer. Six weeks later, Cheri was diagnosed. What began as a difficult and uncertain season opened doors neither of them could have anticipated.

“People began coming into the shop not only to buy cheese, but to check on Cheri, ask how she was doing and offer encouragement,” Amy says. In the midst of a cancer diagnosis, a new business was becoming something much bigger: a place where people connected.

That spirit has continued to shape Euphoric. When the duo opened Sparrow Wine Bar next door, it became a place for people to gather around good food, good wine, and good conversation.

Cheri and Amy have chosen to share their cancer stories openly, believing that good can come from hard things. Their mission is simple: to love everyone who walks through the door. “Whether someone comes in for a favorite cheese, a glass of wine or just to say hello, we hope they leave feeling welcomed, known and cared for,” Cheri says.

This October, that mission continues as Euphoric gives back to Breast Connect — a local organization supporting people in the community affected by breast cancer.

“This October, we’re proud to give back to an organization that does so much for our community.”



“Breast cancer changed our lives but it also showed us the incredible power of community. We’re so grateful to be cancer-free and to be able to use our story to give back.”
 ♥ Amy & Cheri

Best friends Amy and Cheri opened Euphoric Cheese Shop in 2021 and expanded with Sparrow Wine Bar in 2023. The businesses are located in the West End Shopping Center at the intersection of Kingston Pike and Concord Road.



OCTOBER 20-24 10% OF SALES

from both Euphoric Cheese Shop and Sparrow Wine Bar will be donated to Breast Connect

TASTE OF TURKEY CREEK

October 9

Amy will be speaking about her journey at this community event raising funds for Breast Connect

OCTOBER EVENTS

October 22

World of Cheese Class
Pellissippi State - Blount County Campus

October 25

Harvest Fest, Farragut

euphoric
CHEESE SHOP

EuphoricCheese.com

sparrow
WINE BAR

SparrowWineBar.com

139 W. End Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37934

2026 Cancer Awareness Event Calendar



October 8
Fit for the Cure — Free Bra Fittings
Dillard's, 7600 Kingston Pike



October 11
Paint a Barn Quilt Square
5:30–8 PM | Cato, 4247 Sam Walton Way



October 24
Pink Dress Run
Presented by Men Wear Pink of the American Cancer Society.
9 AM–1/2 PM | World's Fair Park



October 9
Taste of Turkey Creek
Savor local flavors while supporting Breast Connect, helping provide hope, care, and local breast cancer survivors.
6–9 PM
Pinnacle Turkey Creek



October 11
Making Strides of Founder's Park
Founder's Park at Campbell Station



October 21
Cancer Support Community East Tennessee Fall Luncheon & Silent Auction
11 AM–1 PM | Bridgewater Event Place



October 27
Tile for Tatas
American Mahjong, benefit Breast Connect
11am-2pm / Knoxville Botanical Gardens



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Annual checkups vital to cancer prevention

Annual health checkups are so vital that many insurance providers offer once-yearly wellness visits free of charge to policy holders. It's important for people to get annual physicals even if they feel fit and healthy, as these yearly visits can help uncover issues that may not be producing symptoms. Annual wellness visits also afford adults an opportunity to discuss their lifestyle with their physicians, which can identify areas where changes might be necessary with a goal toward improving long-term health.

Yearly health checkups also provide an opportunity to learn about key screenings, especially those that may detect for cancer. But industry surveys indicate far too many adults aren't taking this vital step. A 2024 survey from the Prevent Cancer Foundation found that 39 percent of surveyed adults had not had a routine medical appointment in the previous 12 months. That's a troubling finding and one that could be more costly than adults realize, as the PCF reports that as many as 50 percent of cancer cases and half of all cancer deaths are preventable. Screening for cancer, a process that often begins with discussions during annual wellness checkups, is a life-saving and typically non-intrusive way to detect the disease at its earliest, most treatable stage, a point in most cancer instances when symptoms are not necessarily present or noticeable.

Annual checkups also offer patients an opportunity to discuss lifestyle changes that can decrease their cancer risk. For example, the American Cancer Society notes that a sedentary lifestyle, a diet lacking in sufficient nutrition and excessive alcohol consumption all can increase a person's cancer risk. Annual wellness visits provide an excellent opportunity for adults to discuss their lifestyle with their physicians, who may recommend some potentially life-saving tweaks that can greatly reduce a person's risk for cancer.

Simple ways to cut cancer risk

Perhaps the most comforting aspect of cancer prevention is that many of the strategies that can reduce instances of the disease are simple:

- **Avoid tobacco.** *The link between tobacco use and cancer has been known for a long time, and the good news is the message touting the importance of avoiding tobacco is working. The American Cancer Society reports that cigarette smoking rates had reached historic lows in 2019. While that's great news, it might not tell the whole story, as consumers now have many other ways to use tobacco, each of which have been linked to cancer. So it's not simply avoiding cigarettes, but also cigars, hookahs, chewing tobacco, vaping products, and more, that is necessary to reduce cancer risk.*
- **Shield your skin from the sun.** The PCF notes that exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays causes the most skin cancers. The WCRFI reports that melanoma of the skin is the thirteenth most common cancer in men and the fifteenth most common cancer in women across the globe. Protecting the skin from the sun is as simple as applying a sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 and covering up when spending long periods of time in the sun. The PCF urges individuals to avoid tanning beds and protect their skin year-round, including in winter.
- **Utilize fruits and vegetables in your fight against cancer.** *The popularity of plant-based diets is on the rise. In fact, retail sales of plant-based foods in the United States increased by 11 percent in a single year between 2018 and 2019, according to data from the Plant Based Foods Association. A greater reliance on plant-based diets could go a long way toward reducing cancer deaths, as the PCF notes a 2021 study found that three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit each day reduced the risk of cancer death by 10 percent.*
- **Avoid excessive alcohol consumption.** The PCF notes that alcohol has been linked to cancers of the breast, liver, esophagus, and colon. When consuming alcohol, women are urged to limit their consumption to one drink or fewer each day, while men should limit their consumption to two or fewer alcoholic beverages per day. The science is simple: the more alcohol a person drinks, the greater his or her risk for cancer.

Cancer prevention is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle, and there are many simple ways people can cut their cancer risk.

Can certain foods lower cancer risk?

There is no way to completely prevent a cancer diagnosis, but certain foods may help to reduce your risk for the disease. According to MD Anderson Cancer Center, cancer-fighting foods are plant-based items that are rich in phytochemicals, which also are called phytonutrients. UC Davis Nutrition Department says phytochemicals are bioactive compounds found in vegetables, cereal grains and plant-based beverages like tea. Researchers have found phytochemicals can protect humans from environmental toxins and metabolic processes that can lead to chronic diseases, such as cancer and heart disease. Polyphenols are good examples of phytochemicals.

Health experts recommend packing every meal with healthy and nutritious foods that include plenty of vegetables, whole grains, fruits, and beans. MDACC recommends filling at least two-thirds of a plate with these healthy options. The remaining one-third of the meal should come from lean meat, fish or plant-based proteins and nuts/seeds. It also is important to limit foods that may increase cancer risk, including sugar-sweetened drinks and foods, processed meats, red meat, and alcohol.

When revamping diets to help reduce cancer risk, these heavy hitters should be included:

- Berries
 - Broccoli
 - Brussels sprouts
 - Cauliflower
 - Edamame
 - Eggs or egg substitute
 - Fish
 - Green or white tea
 - Grapes
- Leafy greens
 - Lean chicken
 - Lentils and other legumes/beans
 - Oatmeal
 - Oranges
 - Quinoa
 - Sweet potatoes
 - Tomatoes
 - Whole grains, including brown rice



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alcohol



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