

Patient advocate helps cancer victims

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they couldn't release her address or telephone number but said they would forward a letter to her for me.

"THE SAME DAY I got the letter from Woman's Day saying they had forwarded my letter to her, I got a call from Lydia herself," she said. "I talked to her for at least two hours, and she gave me a lot of the information about what had happened to her husband and where they had gone for help."

"Through Lydia's help and because their husband's diagnoses were similar, the Wiseman's were able to see the same physician who had helped Joe Cunningham. It was at this time they discovered his brain tumor was not growing or causing him any harm and it would have been an unnecessary risk to operate.

"Our doctor had been recommend-

ing an operation and radiation and Tim didn't even need it," Kathy said. "In fact, a person can only get radiation treatments once, so if we had let them do it and if something ever happened down the road where Tim needed the treatment he wouldn't have been able to use it."

Wiseman said she's called Lydia a lot since then. "She's sent us a packet of information and lists of books we could read and she's called other friends for me who didn't know where to turn," she said. "No matter what ends up happening, at least it's better to know what's going on and to have some control."

"ONCE LYDIA started encouraging me it changed our whole approach," she said. "Now we've selected our own treatments and we've only been able to do this because of

everything we took the time to learn."

Today Tim Wiseman is feeling fine and is back at work, his wife said.

Although the ending is not a happy one for Ann Meloche, a Pontiac attorney, she still credits Lydia with helping to give her an extra year with her husband, Joe Christman, before he died in September.

Ann also heard about Lydia because friends had seen the magazine article she had written. She contacted her just shortly after her husband was diagnosed as having terminal melanoma, the most dangerous type of skin cancer.

"I think the effects of what she's doing will be far reaching," Ann said. "I bless the day I found her. I learned so much about melanoma that I could ask the doctors questions. She sent me so many articles

on her own, without my asking, just because she didn't want to see me go through the same thing she went through with her husband."

Ann and her husband continually fought his illness, traveling frequently to New York's Sloan Kettering Institute for experimental treatment.

"ALL OF the doctors here kept telling us to accept it and not fight it — give Joe quality of life for the time he had left," she said. "Those words were foreign to us. If we hadn't fought it he would have died at least nine months sooner."

"I was able to say goodbye knowing we'd done everything we could," she said. "The survivors are left to deal with the guilt and the wondering was there something else I could have done, and I don't have to go through that. We weren't able to save my husband, but we saved the

lives of those of us left behind."

Ann credits Lydia with being a pioneer in the patient advocacy field. "Without her help I would have been walking blindly," she said. "She really has established a kind of a network where we all help each other. Lydia gave me a lot of hope which I was then able to turn around and give to Joe."

Lydia said she takes the time to help people because she knows what it's like to be in their shoes and feel the frustration of not being able to make that loved one better.

"If you sit and don't do anything and the person dies, then you'll have the rest of your life to sit and feel guilty," she said. "This way, even if Joe would have died, I could tell our children we did everything we could to save him and I think that's the way a lot of people feel. You have to at least give it a try."

JOE CUNNINGHAM, who is feeling fine and back at work as a tax accountant with the Southfield firm of Plante & Moran, says he would be dead if it wasn't for the persistence and good judgment of his wife.

"Every step along the way there are so many meetings with the doctors," he said. "Lydia always did her homework and she'd always have a list of questions she'd get answered. She was always very polite and courteous, but she was always determined to get those answers."

"There aren't too many people I know who could've done what she did," he said. "It didn't really surprise me when she began getting phone calls and giving advice to others. I've sat and listened to her and in the course of a one hour telephone conversation she can give out more information than any person could ever get from one source."

Finding medical resources

Continued from Page 1

"Always have questions written down before you see the doctor so you'll remember to ask everything you need and never be afraid to ask a question, especially when it's your life or the life of a loved one you're

dealing with."

ALTHOUGH MANY physicians are perfectly content answering questions and encouraging their patients to get a second opinion, some are not, she said.

She said you may want to consider changing doctors if yours seems unwilling to help you find out everything you can about the illness.

"It's also important to know what hospital does what," Cunningham said. "If your husband needs to have some new, highly complicated procedure, you need to find the hospital and the doctor who've done it the most times. Relying on your small, community hospital for a delicate brain operation may not be the best thing to do."

BECAUSE A family is often so distressed after being given discouraging medical news, it can be difficult to follow through and learn everything you should about the illness, she said.

"Often the family doesn't really even have time to think. But it's not a situation where people can afford to take chances," Cunningham said. "I've seen it happen over and over again where someone dies because they didn't know everything they could have before they went ahead and followed one doctor's advice. You can't be afraid to ask questions."

Cunningham is available to speak about her experiences to area community organizations and can be contacted at 855-0294.

Hills man elected

Tom Peters of Farmington Hills was elected a director at a recent Ronald McDonald House board meeting. The term of office will be for two years in support of the activities of the house.

Situated next to Children's Hospital of Michigan, the house is a home away from home for up to 20 families at a time. Each year more than 1,000 families from throughout

Michigan, across the country and around the world find comfort and security within its walls.

The Ronald McDonald House is owned and operated by a non-profit corporation, Children's Oncology Services of Michigan, and licensed by the Michigan Department of Health. More information about the Ronald McDonald House may be obtained by calling 745-5909.

Black box saves lives

Heart disease claims the life of one American every minute. Harper Hospital is a major center for implantation and research of a new device that helps prevent sudden death in certain cardiac patients.

A little black box, which looks like a remote control device for a garage door opener, is implanted in the

chest of cardiac patients who suffer from episodes of a dangerously rapid heart rhythm.

When the heart goes into such a potentially lethal rhythm, the little black box takes over by sending a small charge to the heart. This charge helps the heart return to a normal rhythm.

chalkboard

Chalkboard lists events that will take place in Farmington Public Schools through the week. The calendar is compiled by Paul Barber, the school district coordinator, who can be reached at 471-6441.

| date | school | event | time | location | fee |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|------|
| Feb. 12 | All | Winter break begins | | | |
| Feb. 12 | East | Flower Sale | a.m. | School | fee |
| Feb. 12 | F.C.B. | Valentine Dinner/Dance | 6:30 p.m. | Glen Oaks | \$23 |
| Feb. 12 | Larkshire | Valentine Lunch | Noon | Rm. 17 | free |
| Feb. 12 | Langacre | Valentine Room Parties | 2:40 p.m. | Classrooms | free |
| Feb. 12 | OM | Regional Judge's Training | 6:30 p.m. | Oakland School | free |
| Feb. 12 | Wood Creek | Outdoor education | All day | Walled Lake | free |
| Feb. 13 | High Schools | M.S.B.O.A. | All day | HHS | fee |
| Feb. 16 | All | Board of Education meeting | 7:30 p.m. | Adm. Bldg. | free |

Tickets sold at discount for circus

Metrogroup Promotions, in cooperation with Moslem Temple Shrine, is offering up to 30 percent off on 10 selected performances of the Shrine Circus in Detroit March 11-27. Metrogroup's selected performance discount program has grown into the largest discount ticket program in Michigan.

It is a mail-in-only offer. Only the top two price-range seats are offered, rows 1-18 only, no end-zone seats, which makes all seats the best of the house. Further, there are no per-ticket charges and no handling charges.

Mallors can be picked up at all Wendy's restaurants in the tri-county area.

For up-to-date ticket information, call Metrogroup Selected Performance Discount Circus Tickets 24-hour hotline, 353-9777.

Let's Start Lent with a Sacrificial Breakfast at
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