

Cancer center helps patients battle back

BY PHIL FOLEY
STAFF WRITER

Two years ago Nov's Kim Grioux was a personal trainer teaching people how to have a better day. Now she's a patient fighting to have another day.

Grioux, along with her daughters Kathryn and Krystina, was among more than a score of cancer patients, families, volunteers and associates on hand for the opening of the Mad Hatter Tea Party display Nov. 12 in the Nancy A. Fox Art Gallery at Providence Hospital and Medical Centers' Assarian Cancer Center in Novi.

The display, a collection of teapots and "all things tea" made in the center's ceramics program over the past six months, will be open to the public 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The ceramics program is just one of more than a dozen programs offered through the hospital's Center for the Healing Arts.

"Western medicine," said Eleana M. Weissman, the center's supervisor, "is about disease. It looks at illness as a problem that's really technical. Healing encompasses a lot more. It's not just the cancer that needs treatment."

The center opened as part of the Assarian Cancer



Farmington resident Edna Grainer (left), King of Hearts, and Larry Siney of Commerce Township, The Wizard, chat with the Queen of Hearts Eleana M. Weissman, Supervisor of the Center for the Healing Arts in the Cancer Center at Providence Hospital and Medical Centers in Novi.

Center in 1999. The following year, Grioux discovered she had cancer.

It didn't come as a total surprise. Both sides of her family have a history of cancer. "You can't beat genetics," she said. Still, the news came hard.

"I'm only 43," said Grioux. "When they tell you you have cancer it's very devastating." Weissman said that's why there is a need for someplace like the Healing Arts Center. "We need to address all the needs of a person." That means offered everything from art and pottery classes to prayer and meditation.

"My kids have been seeing a social worker," said Grioux, added, "They love coming here for the pottery classes."

Grioux recently switched her primary care from Providence to the Karmanos Cancer Institute in order to take advantage of a bone marrow transplant technique not available through Providence. However Grioux and her daughters still come to the Healing Arts Center.

"While the doctors try to fix you, the people here try to uplift you," she said.

When physicians told David Miller, who was already suffering from heart disease, that he had bladder cancer, "I really freaked out."

The Farmington Hills man said making pottery at the center is very relaxing. He

said it helps him blot out his fears and concerns, if just for a little while.

He said Judy Buresh, the center's artist in residence and a cancer survivor herself, is a very caring person. He said her ceramic classes are "not just about pottery," noting that sometimes they just talk.

Miller said the doctors have told him his illness is completely treatable, but he fretted. "They only tell you as much as you need to know." So far, however, he's had no recurrence since his treatment earlier this year.

And while he waits for his 90-day check-up next month, "This gives me a place to get away from it all."

Six months ago Buresh enrolled in her ceramics class start making tea pots. The result has been a whimsical world of cats, elephants and turtles.

They're all on display in the Nancy A. Fox Art Gallery at the Assarian Cancer Center on the Providence Hospital and Medical Centers campus of 47601 Grand River Avenue.

For more information about the center and its offerings call Weissman at (248) 465-5448 or visit the hospital's Web site at www.providence-hospital.org

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"DREAMS 2002 was an amazing event with more than 700 people attending," said Larry Gaynor, president and CEO, The Nailco Group. "We truly support and appreciate the service The Center provides to the community and children in crisis."

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