

SACRED HEART ACADEMY

# HEART

FALL 2018



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VALUE OF ALL-  
GIRLS' EDUCATION**

**ALUMNAE  
CONFRONTING  
CANCER**

**2017-2018  
HONOR ROLL  
OF GIVING**



## CONFRONTING CANCER

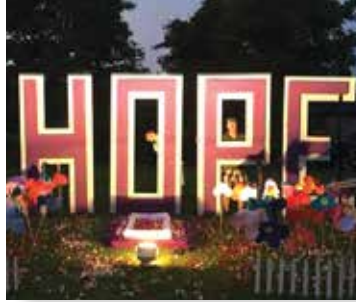
ACCORDING TO THOSE WHO STUDY IT, CANCER IS ACTUALLY MANY DIFFERENT DISEASES. EVERY DAY, SCIENTISTS ARE LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE BASIC BIOLOGY THAT HELPS RESEARCHERS DEVELOP NEW THERAPIES THAT WILL BE ABLE TO OFFER HOPE AND EXTEND LIVES. STILL, EVEN AS SURVIVAL RATES FOR MANY CANCERS CONTINUE TO INCREASE, THERE IS A DISTANCE TO GO BEFORE WE CAN SAY THAT WE HAVE TRIUMPHED OVER CANCER. IN THIS ISSUE OF *HEART*, YOU WILL MEET SACRED HEART COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO TREAT, RESEARCH, AND EDUCATE ABOUT THE DISEASE, ALL WITH THE GOAL OF SUPPORTING PATIENTS, SURVIVORS, AND FAMILIES AS WE LOOK TOWARDS THE DAY WHEN CONFRONTING CANCER BECOMES CANCER CONQUERED.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Because of your generosity, our students are sequencing genes, playing ice hockey, and participating in a professional-quality musical at the iconic Shubert Theater in New Haven. Nothing we do at the Academy is “ordinary” — that word is not in our vocabulary.

Dear Friends,

There is magic in the air here at Sacred Heart Academy as we anticipate the beatification of **Blessed Clelia Merloni**, foundress of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on November 3. Last week 20 Apostles departed for Rome to represent the United States at this historic event. Included in this group were alumnae **Sr. Clare Millea '65** (former General Superior); **Sr. Caroline Severino '58**; **Sr. Shawn Lyons '63**; **Sr. Mary Grace Giaimo '72**; **Sr. Mariette Moan '77**; **Sr. Doretta D'Albero '77**; **Sr. Anne Walsh '81** (presently living in Rome and involved in preparation for the beatification); and **Sr. Linda Pettinella '65**. We were thrilled to learn that our own theology teacher and co-director of Campus Ministry, **Sr. Elizabeth Doyle** (Cor Jesu Academy '08), will serve as the American correspondent on EWTN for the beatification liturgy. Our community celebrated at the November First Friday liturgy, in which we were joined by a number of Apostles who live here at Mt. Sacred Heart, including many retired Sisters from Sacred Heart Manor. It truly warms my heart to see the excitement and enthusiasm of our entire school community who have joined the Apostles in special prayers in preparation for this momentous occasion. We are all sons and daughters of Clelia. Our next issue of *HEART* will be centered on Blessed Clelia Merloni and this extraordinary event in the history of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

After the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) visiting team was hosted by the school in October, the chairs of the committee met with Principal **Sr. Kathleen Mary** and me to give us their preliminary response. I wish I could fully put into words the enthusiastic report we received. They spoke of our extraordinary sense of charisma and mission that permeates the school;

our students who are self-confident, warm, welcoming, and articulate; our dedicated faculty and staff; and the appreciation of our rich traditions such as musical and Enthronement and Spirit Week. And they noted that we are too humble about everything wonderful happening here. Sacred Heart Academy is truly a special place. In the next issue of *HEART*, you will be able to read more about the report's details.

Life here at the Academy is great! Our new building is taking shape and continues to be on budget and on time. The students enjoyed signing the last beam to be placed in the ceiling. The dedication will take place next September, so watch for an announcement of the date. The cast of our musical, *Leader of the Pack*, is rehearsing feverishly every day; sports teams have been competing successfully when it isn't raining; and students are working every day in the classroom, preparing for the next stage of their education. I love my ministry here!

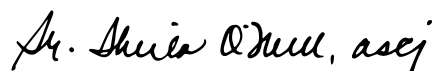
I hope you enjoy this issue of *HEART*, as we tackle a topic that has probably touched all of us in some way: cancer. True to our charism to share God's love and compassion in all facets of our world, we have highlighted a few of our alumnae who are doing amazing work to confront this disease. You will read about an APRN who specializes in pediatric oncology; a cell/molecular biologist doing oncology research at a pharmaceutical company; an art therapist and counselor in private practice who works with cancer patients and their families; several other professionals; and volunteers who support cancer patients and their families. Our *Excelsior Women* continue the legacy of making the world a better place.

You can also read about the vitality of girls' schools and my vision for Sacred Heart, including some new ideas inspired by my attendance in June at the Global Forum on Girls' Education II in Washington, D.C. At that event, I had the opportunity to meet with educators from girls' schools throughout the world.

I want to especially recognize all our donors listed in our Honor Roll of Giving. The "magic" that happens each day at Sacred Heart Academy is the direct result of a dedicated faculty and staff, and generous people like you who give us the means to go far beyond a standard curriculum. Because of your generosity, our students are sequencing genes, playing ice hockey, and participating in a professional-quality musical at the iconic Shubert Theater in New Haven. Nothing we do at the Academy is "ordinary" — that word is not in our vocabulary.

We want only the best for our students, because they are the best part of everything we do; they are the reason why we come here each day and the reason for our pride! On behalf of all of these future *Excelsior Women*, I thank you. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus abundantly bless you with His love.

Gratefully in the Heart of Christ,



Sr. Sheila O'Neill, ASCJ, Ph.D., '71  
President

# HEART MAGAZINE

Fall 2018

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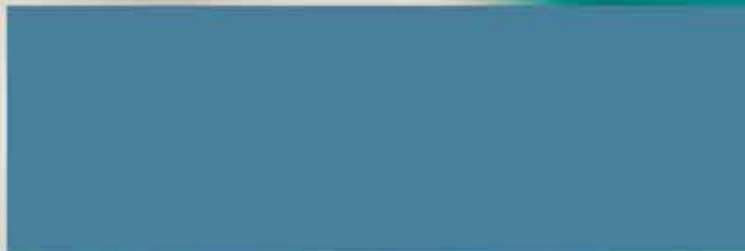
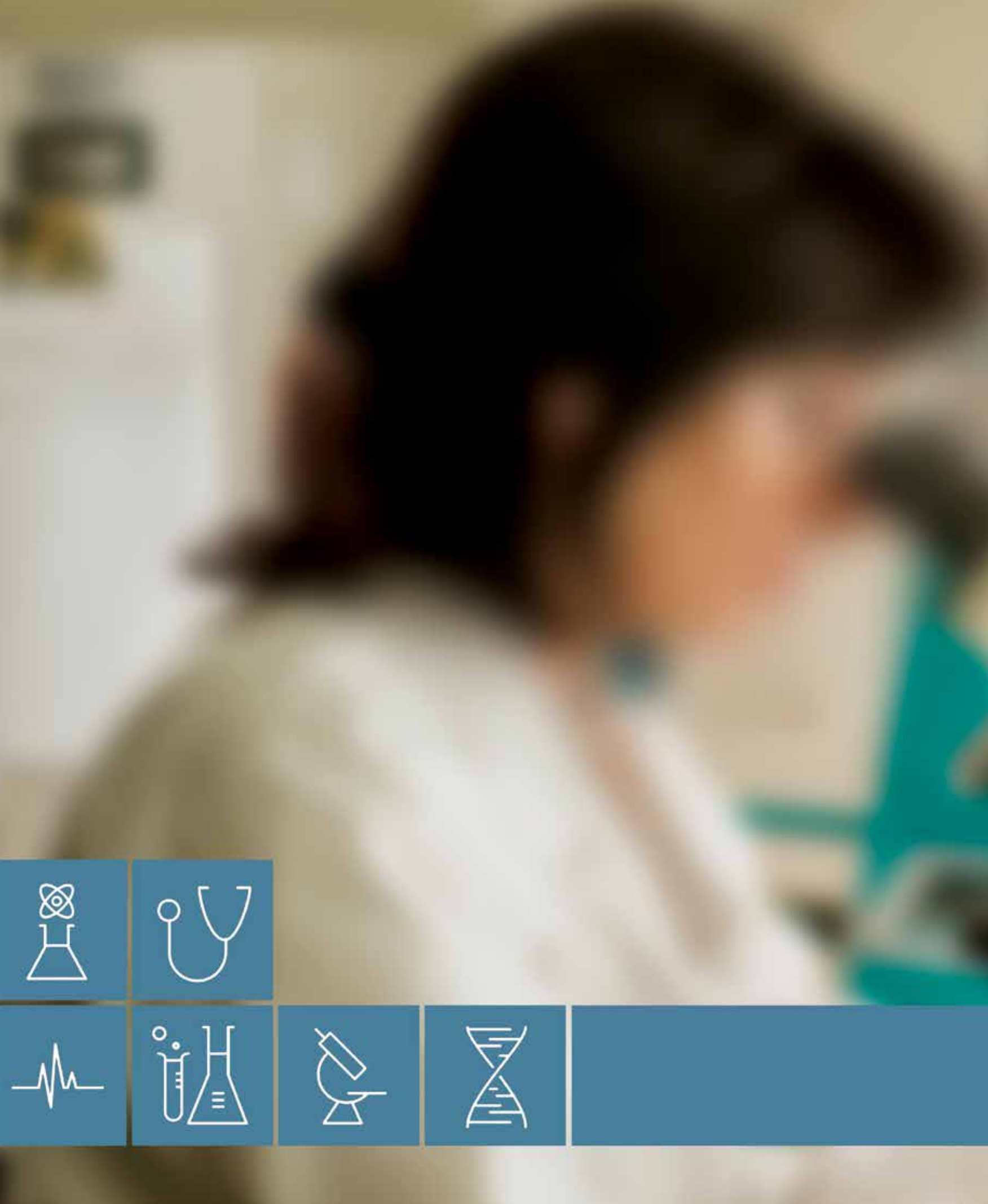
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Sacred Heart Academy admits students of any race, creed, national or ethnic origin, and disability status to all the rights, privileges, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate in these areas in the administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school-administered programs.



**Conquering any disease is a team effort,  
requiring the full range of human initiative,  
expertise, and dedication.**

**In the next pages, you will read about 11 members of the  
Sacred Heart community who are working to understand and  
cure cancer — seven whose professional paths led them to  
medicine, research, or education, and four who volunteer for  
organizations that support cancer patients, their families,  
and research institutions.**

**CONFRONTING CANCER**



I fight hard for the day I may be out of a job  
because a cure has been found. Nothing  
would make me happier.

Kathleen Barszczewski '82

*Above, Kathy Barszczewski '82, in a treatment room. This linear accelerator machine is used in radiation therapy — a significant part of cancer care.*



CONFRONTING CANCER

# Kathleen Barszczewski '82

## THE RADIATION THERAPIST

"It's a scary moment, the first time you turn on the beam for a patient's treatment," says radiation therapist Kathleen Barszczewski, RRT. "Radiation damages the genetic structure of the tumor cells, preventing them from replicating. You must be totally vigilant about the power you have in your hands, and remember that there is a person attached to the cells you are trying to destroy."

**N**ow chief radiation therapist at the Radiation Center of Greater Nashua in New Hampshire, Kathy began her professional studies right after graduating from Sacred Heart. "I was only 19," she says, "and I appreciated the older students who took me under their wings and supported me as we mastered the complex technology together, and learned how to be with people facing life-threatening disease."

After training at the Joint Center for Radiation Therapy at Harvard Medical School, she worked at Bridgeport Hospital, then joined the staff at her current facility, where she became chief radiation therapist in 1998. Her work is both highly technical and intensely human. "Patients are often frightened and vulnerable," Kathy says. "Sometimes you cry with them, or hug them, or just talk with them about what they did over the weekend."

At the same time, precision is everything, as Kathy and her colleagues deliver meticulously calculated and calibrated doses of radiation with "gigantic machines called linear accelerators that have every dial, knob, and circuit you can imagine." Radiation therapy has changed since Kathy first entered the field, with practitioners constantly embracing new and often more complex technologies. "If you think of how much phones have changed since the mid '80s," Kathy says, "you'll have an idea of how much radiation therapy has advanced."



*Kathy Barszczewski '82 'Radiating Hope' at the Radiation Center of Greater Nashua.*

Kathy shares her knowledge regularly as a guest lecturer in biology classes at Southern New Hampshire University, often finding that students come to her with their own stories about the effects of cancer on their lives.

Kathy herself has had her life touched by the disease; she has lost grandparents, co-

Patients are often frightened and vulnerable. Sometimes you cry with them, or hug them, or just talk with them about what they did over the weekend.

Kathleen Barszczewski '82

workers, and best friends. She has chaired and participates in the Relay for Life® of Greater Nashua with her team, Radiating Hope. She has also participated in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in Boston and New York, joining forces with her sister-in-law, who lost a sister to breast cancer and has another sister currently living with the disease.

"I fight hard for the day I may be out of a job because a cure has been found," she says. "Nothing would make me happier."



## CONFRONTING CANCER

# Karen Zusi '07

### THE COMMUNICATOR



photo by David Tran

A lot of people are dedicating their careers to understanding cancer biology and, ultimately, finding a cure. Helping the public understand that work is extremely gratifying.

Karen Zusi '07

In her earlier years, Karen Zusi dreamed of being a wildlife biologist. During freshman year biology at Sacred Heart with **Susan Nelson**, Karen did a research project on backyard birds that sparked a lifelong interest in bird watching. She did research on birds while an undergraduate at Villanova University. She has worked as a naturalist at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, Connecticut, and has volunteered at Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History. Her master's degree from Frostburg State University in Maryland is in wildlife biology. "I loved the idea that I could study animals for a living," she says.

But as time went on, Karen began to think that, professionally, she also wanted to do something in another area of interest: communications. So she completed a master's program in science journalism at Boston University, and became a science writer. Karen's work, both print and multimedia, has appeared with PRI's *Living on Earth*, *The Scientist*, *Cell*, and various institutional and corporate clients.

In 2016, she began working in communications for the Broad Institute, a major Boston-area biomedical research center where cancer research is one of the top priorities. In her

current position as media relations manager, Karen is responsible for communicating to journalists about the institute's work so that they can, in turn, inform the public. She also writes for Broad's website, prepares researchers for talking with media when major findings are about to be announced, and helps plan events such as Broad's public lectures. When a crew from *The Boston Globe* newspaper visited the Broad Institute earlier this year for a story on finding new uses for old drugs — including treating cancer — Karen made the tour arrangements, took notes for the *Globe* photographer, and facilitated communication between scientists and journalists.

Karen mentions two Broad initiatives that she thinks are particularly worth noting. One is research into blood biopsies — enabling routine monitoring of patients' tumors directly from blood samples. "The idea," she says, "is that, since tumors shed pieces of DNA into the bloodstream, we might be able to draw blood rather than subject patients to the standard, invasive, surgical biopsy procedure."

The other initiative is part of Broad's focus on partnering directly with patients. The Metastatic Breast Cancer Project — a crowd-sourced, social media driven effort to engage those with metastatic breast cancer as partners in research — has patients directly submit saliva samples and allow access to their tumor samples for genome sequencing. De-identified data from the samples and other clinical information are released and shared across the global research community to enable scientific understanding of the disease and develop new treatment strategies.

"A lot of people are dedicating their careers to understanding cancer biology and, ultimately, finding a cure." Karen says. "Helping the public understand that work is extremely gratifying."



## CONFRONTING CANCER

# Maureen Brady Moran '75

## THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD CHAIR



Clinical trials of new drugs and medical devices offer hope and sometimes positive outcomes for thousands of patients every year. But the trials often carry risks as well.

Making sure that those patients are protected is the job of institutional review boards (IRBs) like the one at Northwestern University, where Maureen Brady Moran,

MPH chairs one of the IRB's review panels. Her panel oversees protection of participants in clinical trials of new cancer therapies, as well as other research studies at the medical school. "We and other institutions are required by the Food and Drug Administration — the FDA — to ensure that possible risks are outweighed by the potential benefits of the proposed research," she explains. IRBs also ensure that potential participants are adequately informed of risks, and kept apprised of additional relevant information that may become available during the course of the research.

In her day-to-day work at Northwestern, Maureen is an assistant professor at the Feinberg School of Medicine, where she teaches Ethical Issues in Clinical Research, and the human subjects research component of other courses taken both by medical students and students in the life sciences. She is also director of admissions and graduate affairs for the medical school's program in public health. She has an undergraduate degree in food and nutrition from the University of St. Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut, and a master's degree in public health/chronic disease epidemiology from Yale School of Public Health. Prior to her current positions, Maureen worked in the fields of dietetics, geriatrics, and preventive medicine.

Of the eight or nine hundred research studies Maureen's panel is responsible for annually, about a quarter are related to cancer therapies. Currently, nationwide, over 16,000 clinical trials are underway. Often, especially in oncology, the same trial will be conducted at multiple sites both to acquire enough subjects and to make results more generalizable. Clinical trials almost always combine an existing standard of care with a new therapy.

Maureen explains that clinical trial participants interact with the investigating team, which is responsible for communicating all the necessary information and making sure that informed consent is obtained. The IRB is there to monitor the processes through regular reviews, and respond to problems. Where problems occur, the IRB can require additional training for the investigators, observe the consent process, or have the project audited.



Patients' involvement in clinical trials often last weeks or months — sometimes even years. Participants want to know, what are the risks, what are you going to do to me, and what might happen?

Maureen Brady Moran '75

"Patients' involvement in clinical trials often last weeks or months — sometimes even years," Maureen says, "Participants want to know, what are the risks, what are you going to do to me, and what might happen? We help investigators interpret the research protocols in lay language to make sure everything is clear. Our absolute commitment is to make sure that investigators are acting at all times in the best interests of clinical trial participants."



## CONFRONTING CANCER

# Caitlin Dell Iannucci '02

### THE ART THERAPIST

Caitlin Iannucci, LPC, ATR, CBC, LLC has always loved art, but its transformative power was brought home to her when, as a child, she watched her father create paintings about his experiences in the Vietnam War.

"I saw the connections he made with others through his prolific and award-winning artwork," she says, "as they shared their similar experiences." Her father's subsequent battle with lung cancer also shaped her professional career.

Her first encounter with the study of psychology came a bit later, when she enrolled in AP Psychology at Sacred Heart during her senior year. "The subject seemed like a natural pairing with art," she says, "and so the direction of my career began to unfold." She combined the two fields in her post-secondary education at Albertus Magnus College, with an undergraduate degree in psychology, and a master's in art therapy.

Before establishing her private practice in 2015 (caitliniannucci.com), Caitlin worked as a school-based mental health clinician and then as an art therapy clinician in a group practice. Now, she sees a diverse clientele of children and adults, including individuals affected by cancer and their family members. "What I love most about what I do," Caitlin says, "is helping people find ways to express emotions and reflect on experiences without having to find the words. Art therapy is different for everyone. Sometimes it looks like art *as* therapy, other times it is art *in* therapy. Art therapy is process-oriented and inquisitive. We ask questions and discover together. The therapy often empowers clients to delve deeper and find meaning in the art process itself. And it is often in that space that healing can occur."



Caitlin, who is also an adjunct professor of art therapy at Albertus Magnus, has defined her clinical specialties to include grief, trauma, depression, and anxiety. She finds art therapy to be particularly meaningful to the bereaved and has recently been certified as a provider of compassionate bereavement care through the MISS Foundation — which serves families who have experienced the death of a child — and the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Family Trust.

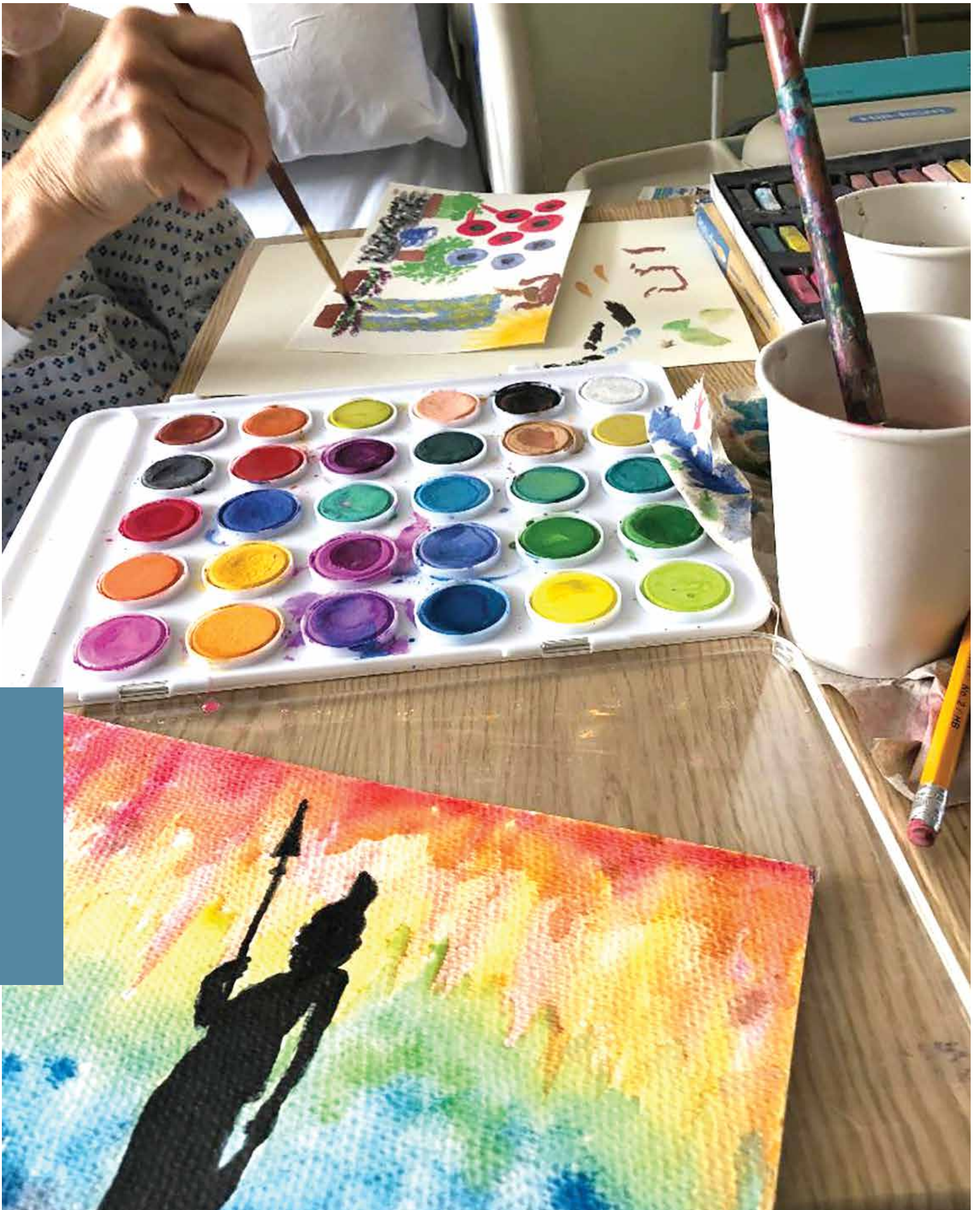
When she is not seeing clients or managing the business part of her practice, Caitlin spends time with her husband, two young sons, and their rescue dogs; enjoys the outdoors; and creates her own art in her studio.

What I love most about what I do is helping people find ways to express emotions and reflect on experiences without having to find the words. Art therapy is different for everyone. Sometimes it looks like art *as* therapy, other times it is art *in* therapy.

Caitlin Dell Iannucci '02

"If you had told me ten years ago that I would have my own practice, I probably would not have believed you," she says. "But, in addition to having the world of psychology opened to me, the greatest lessons I learned at Sacred Heart were leadership and service to others through compassion. I find myself operating from those core values every day."

*Right, A woman processes a diagnosis of cancer through watercolors during her hospital stay.*





## CONFRONTING CANCER

# Melanie Dabakis Degliuomini '05

## THE PHYSICIAN



Children are amazing. They are beyond resilient. They can be acutely ill, admitted into the hospital, while having smiles on their faces and holding their favorite toys.

Melanie Dabakis Degliuomini '05

As early as her sophomore year at Sacred Heart, Melanie Dabakis Degliuomini, MD knew that she wanted a career in medicine.

That year, her father succumbed to pancreatic cancer and, Melanie says, "I wanted to dedicate my life to a field that could do great good for others experiencing what my father and family went through."

After graduating from Fordham University with a BS in biology, Melanie obtained her MS and then her MD at Drexel University College of Medicine. Currently a third-year resident in pediatrics at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical College, she plans to specialize in pediatric oncology. "I always knew I wanted to focus on oncology," she says, "but my interest in pediatrics began during medical school when I was on rotation at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children." Starting next year, she will be doing a three-year fellowship in pediatric hematology/oncology.

As a pediatrics resident, Melanie sees 15 to 20 children each day when she is on an outpatient rotation and 20 to 30 children daily on an inpatient rotation. Her young patients range from those coming in for well-child visits, to urgent care cases, to acutely ill children being admitted to the hospital.

"Children are amazing," she says. "They are beyond resilient. They can be acutely ill, admitted into the hospital, while having smiles on their faces and holding their favorite toys."

Still, she says, the obvious difficulty in her chosen field of pediatric hematology/oncology is the challenge of treating children with cancer. Despite the groundbreaking therapeutic advances and new treatment options on the horizon, Melanie notes

*Above, Melanie Degliuomini '05 on an inpatient floor at New York-Presbyterian, Queens location, serving and caring for children from that community.*



## CONFRONTING CANCER

# Alexia Kedves Volpe '01

## THE BIOMEDICAL RESEARCHER

that there will always be children whose cancer is just too severe, not responsive, or unfortunately recurs. "And these," she says, "are by far the most difficult and heartbreaking moments."

At the same time, she notes, "The rewarding aspects of the field are endless. You treat the child in both their worst times and their best times. I cherish the long-term relationships formed with not only the patient, but the entire family. The rapport you build enables you to take this often lengthy and terrifying journey with them."

The work is difficult, with long hours and intense intellectual and emotional demands. But Melanie is devoted to the profession that she always wanted to be part of. "My work ethic is something that I absolutely learned at Sacred Heart," she says. "I also want to honor the influence that **Sr. Mary Jane Paolella** had on me. I will never forget her introducing us to the concept of DNA sequencing, and her pride in us as 'budding female scientists.' As I continue on my path, I will always be grateful for what she taught me."

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What is fascinating from a research perspective is how different each cancer is and how differently even the same disease affects each person because everything can affect one's DNA.

Alexia Kedves Volpe '01



**A**lexia Kedves Volpe is doing now exactly what she hoped she would be doing nearly 20 years ago, when she was a junior in the Biotechnology and Ethics course taught by **Sr. Mary Jane Paolella, ASCJ, '65**. "That was the first time I was aware of what research was about," she says, "and I knew then that I wanted to do that kind of hands-on science."

Alexia went on to major in cell and molecular biology at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. After graduation, she worked for three years in neuroscience research at Yale — focusing on learning and memory in the context of drug addiction — then earned a master's degree at Quinnipiac University in cell and molecular biology.

Since 2009, she has been an investigator at Novartis Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In her first years at Novartis, she was part of a team working to understand the essential cellular mechanisms of *TP53*, the most commonly mutated gene in several kinds of cancer — "really early stage cell biology," she says.

For the past three years, Alexia has been working closely with Novartis' chemists on a project that focuses on epigenetics — the study of changes in organisms that are caused by modification of gene expression (turning genes on or off) rather than alteration of the genetic code itself. She explains, "We are working on an epigenetic target that changes the chromatin state — the accessibility of your DNA to have genes turn on and off. That state can change depending on whether a cell is a normal cell or a cancer cell. The ultimate goal is to create an agent that could be given with standard chemotherapy to make the therapy more effective, to target it more precisely, or to be able to reduce the dosage, since chemo can be toxic." The result, she says, could be longer, or at least healthier lives for a number of patients.

What is fascinating from a research perspective, Alexia notes, is how different each cancer is and how differently even the same disease affects each person because everything can affect one's DNA — age, gender, environmental factors. What is frustrating is that that complexity means that the goal for any project, including her current one, may be a distance away, or may not be met at all.

Still, the successes are exhilarating. "So many research projects do not yield the desired results," she says. "I have been here for ten years and none of the compounds I've worked on have been given to a person. But I hope that what I am working on now will. What keeps us going is the knowledge that any project we are working on could change or save someone's life."



CONFRONTING CANCER  
**Lauren Uscinski '05**  
THE ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE

**A**lthough she knew early on that she wanted to enter a science-related field — Sacred Heart's focus on women in the sciences and, in particular, the Biotechnology and Ethics class taught by Sr. Mary Jane Paoella, ASCJ, '65 left a major impression on her — Lauren Uscinski, DNP, APRN, PPCNP-BC, CPHON® thought that her future lay in becoming a physician. "But my mom kept nudging me also to look into nursing and I eventually realized that the advanced practice role could be a perfect fit. Nurses are trained from day one to see the patient as a whole person."

After obtaining a degree in biology from Wake Forest University, and while applying



Around the time she was accepted to Yale, Lauren's dad was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. "During my Saturday rotations," she says, "I spent time with him on Smilow's transplant unit before returning to take care of my patients. While the experience was difficult, it solidified that I was where I needed to be, doing what I needed to be doing."

Upon graduating from Yale, Lauren went to work as an NP in pediatric neuro-oncology at Miami (now Nicklaus) Children's Hospital. She then took a position in the pediatric bone marrow unit at Miami's Holtz Children's Hospital, and has been clinical transplant nurse practitioner there since 2014. Her patients range from the youngest children to young adults up to 21. Most have a cancer diagnosis, but bone marrow transplants are also a treatment option for conditions like sickle cell anemia and immunodeficiency syndromes.

With an average patient stay of about six weeks, Lauren says that patients and their families can become like family to the staff, creating both the most difficult and the most rewarding parts of Lauren's job. "We are all acutely aware that we have little lives on the line," she says. "When patients don't make it, going back to work the next day can be difficult. But we also get to celebrate when they go home to live their lives, and when we get updates that someone celebrated a milestone birthday or graduated from college."

Lauren notes that relating her own experience — her dad needed a second bone marrow transplant a few years after the first — helps patients open up to her, especially at the most difficult times. "Transplant is a highly complex and rapidly evolving field," she says "and I have learned to become a better advocate for the nursing profession and my patients. They know that I know what they are going through, and they can let me offer them hope."

We are all acutely aware that we have little lives on the line. When patients don't make it, going back to work the next day can be difficult. But we also get to celebrate when they go home to live their lives...

Lauren Uscinski '05

to nursing programs, Lauren worked at Yale's Smilow Cancer Hospital, where her fascination with oncology began. Although she entered Yale School of Nursing on the oncology nurse practitioner (NP) track, pediatric hematology/oncology "clicked" for her, and she switched to the pediatric NP program. She also has a doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree from the University of Miami.

*Right, Lauren Uscinski '05 outside the Chaplin Family Pediatric Emergency Room at Miami's Holtz Children's Hospital.*



# The Volunteers

The individuals profiled here are just a few of the many in the Sacred Heart community who, as volunteers, raise funds for cancer research and provide support for cancer patients and their families.

## KIM DWYER, P'11, '14

"I am a ten-year breast cancer survivor," says Kim Dwyer, mother of Emma '11 and Megan '14. "I wanted to help others who are going through the same experiences I had."

As a patient-to-patient volunteer at Yale's Smilow Cancer Hospital, Kim has mentored more than 25 women, spending time talking with them about non-medical issues and the recovery process. She also volunteers twice a month in Smilow's patient/family resource room, making bracelets of hope with patients and survivors. They have distributed more than five thousand bracelets — used to raise money for cancer-related charities — in the past decade.

In addition to spending several hours on a month on these activities, Kim chaired the annual Looking Forward Fashion Show for six years. Attended by over five hundred people, the show features as its models cancer patients and survivors, as well as Smilow staff. The money raised goes to Smilow's integrative medicine program, which offers patients complementary healing therapies such as massage, reiki, and art therapy, and also provides wigs.

"Smilow is a wonderful place to volunteer," she says, "and you don't have to be a cancer survivor to volunteer there. I love meeting with patients and talking to them about their journey, and I hope that, in our conversations, they can see that I was once like them (bald!) and that their lives can return to normal."

— . . . —

## SHANNON MCKEON '96, P'20

Shannon McKeon started walking to battle cancer in 2010, and she hasn't stopped since.



*Kim Dwyer, P'11, '14 making bracelets of hope for cancer patients.*

I can't stop cancer from hitting my family or others' families again, but through my involvement, I can make the odds of survival better. I continue to walk because I cannot walk away.

Shannon McKeon '96, P'20

"My father was diagnosed with lung cancer after my freshman year in college," she says. "To say that the diagnosis turned our entire family upside down would be an understatement." She participated in the Hamden/North Haven Relay For Life® for several years but wanted a bigger challenge. After seeing a television ad for the Susan G. Komen® Foundation, she attended an information session, heard the statistics about breast cancer (one in eight women), and undertook her first Susan G. Komen® 3-Day.

"I walk 60 miles over three days alongside a thousand other women and men determined to find a cure for cancer," she says. In order to participate in a walk, each participant must raise \$2,300 for that event. To date, Shannon has raised over \$34,000. This November, she will take part in her fourteenth walk, accompanied by her daughter, **Morgan Dubay '20**, doing her first Susan G. Komen® 3-Day.

The money raised goes to both scientific research and community programs that provide screening to underserved women and men, and offer services needed during treatment. "Through my involvement," Shannon says, "I've become a part of something much bigger than myself. I feel like I am doing something about something that I otherwise would be helpless against. I can't stop cancer from hitting my family or others' families again, but through my involvement, I can make the odds of survival better. I continue to walk because I cannot walk away."

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## EMILY LABRANCHE MAUD '94

Emily Maud and her family are part of the leadership committee for the Naugatuck Valley Relay for Life® event, held every June in Shelton. Relay For Life®, the signature fundraiser for the American Cancer Society, is staffed and coordinated by volunteers in



From left, Emily Maud '94 with her son at the June 2018 Naugatuck Valley Relay for Life®; Lia Negele '08 speaks to riders about the impact of their involvement in the 2018 Winter Cycle hosted at Fenway Park; and, mother-daughter team Shannon McKeon '96, P'20 and Morgan Dubay '20 at the October 2015 Philadelphia Susan G. Komen® 3-Day.

thousands of communities and over two dozen countries.

They were inspired to volunteer, she says, by their own loss. "My father was diagnosed with lung cancer when I was 23 and pregnant with my first son," Emily says. "He battled the disease for three years, and then he was gone three weeks before my second son was born. I lost my dad way too early, and my sons were robbed of their grandfather."

For the past few years, Emily's primary responsibility has been creating the garden of hope and the caregiver recognition ceremony each year. Those two pieces together support and honor not only cancer patients but also the people who care for and support them.

"I am proud to be part of this event," she says, "knowing that it makes a difference in our community not only to those facing the beast that is cancer, but also as a support to those who are walking beside them on this most difficult journey. We offer a sense of family and camaraderie so that no one feels alone. We celebrate those who fought and won, we remember those we have lost, and we fight back in the hope that one day no one will hear the words 'you have cancer' ever again."

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We celebrate those who fought and won, we remember those we have lost, and we fight back in the hope that one day no one will hear the words 'you have cancer' ever again.

Emily LaBranche Maud '94

## LIA MOREGGI NEGELE '08

A number of Boston area organizations are the beneficiaries of Lia Moreggi Negele's belief in the power of volunteering.

"Everyone has a skill to bring to the table," Lia says, and she does everything from cooking meals at Ronald McDonald House — where families can stay at little or no cost to be close to their hospitalized children — to selling tickets for benefit events supporting Boston Children's Hospital.

Lia also works with organizations specifically focused on cancer treatment and support. She raises funds with the Never Give Up team that participates in the Pan-Mass Challenge, a cycling event that donates all rider-raised dollars to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. The Pan-Mass Challenge is the largest athletic fundraiser in the country. For the Sunshine Kids Foundation, which provides free activities for children undergoing cancer treatment, Lia sells tickets to its annual comedy show fundraiser, and helps publicize the event.

Lia donates four to six hours of her time each month. Sometimes, she says supporting is as simple as sharing information on social media or donating money. "Getting involved," she adds, "can also mean digging in and working on a committee to make the event happen."

And it may sound like a cliché, but Lia wants others to know about the benefits of volunteering — for the volunteer! "The best part," she says "is being surrounded by the energy of individuals in the same room, looking to move a mission forward. You can't help but walk away feeling more at peace when you are a part of something bigger than you." "Get out of your comfort zone," she advises, "and you will find opportunities of all shapes and sizes."