

# Mid-Atlantic friends

December 2009 \* Newsletter of the Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center



## 2009 - A Summation in One Breath

By Al Goff, MACSC's Board Vice Chairman

(inhale) OK. It's been a whole year since our last newsletter. So, don't you think it's time for another? Let me think. What happened in 2009...?

I am blessed as I remember how the LORD increased the number of our friends this year. Both, the Davidsonville and the Bowie monthly support groups grew in number. The Crofton group joined us as an affiliate and Gary Todd became a new board member. Our support groups invited new speakers and also used some of the American Cancer Society's "I Can Cope" curriculum to inform and encourage.

Did we have events? Oy! Trattoria Sorrento restaurant had a special night in April as a benefit to our organization. On July 18<sup>th</sup>, the Burkes hosted a picnic at their waterfront home in Edgewater, where we also enjoyed a boat ride on the Bay. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, we held our second National Cancer Survivor's Day Dinner at Chesapeake Christian Fellowship, where a very young Sylvia Donovan was our main speaker. In October, we hosted a seminar with author Lynn Eib. And let's not forget the Fashion Show in November!

We said, "See ya later" to our sweet courageous long-time friend, Patricia Taylor, who passed away on August 1<sup>st</sup>. I know that she is NOT looking down on us. She is too busy just staring at Jesus. And that's what I want to do now. By reading our stories and looking at beautiful faces in this newsletter, I recognize that He is in our midst, working in us and through us. May you also have eyes to see. (exhale)

## Sylvia's Christmas Story

By Sylvia Donovan



I am thankful that I had cancer. Does that sound weird? There is more weirdness. I sometimes wish that I could skip the Christmas season altogether. It sounds strange for a Christmas story, doesn't it? It has everything to do with relationships. I have a relationship with cancer that relates to my relationship with my family that relates to Christmas. They are all, well, related. Let me tell you why.



I had just graduated from the University of North Carolina, I was dating a wonderful guy named Jason, I was on track to start a full-time job in my field of therapeutic recreation. Life was great, except for that lingering cough, the fatigue, and the pains I had been experiencing for several months. Perhaps I was tired because I wasn't used to working forty-plus hours a week while maintaining a college-like social life. Thankfully, my mom reminded me to get health insurance since I was no longer a student. [ continued on page 2 ]

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide specialized information to supporters, members, and friends of the Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center.

As you may know, the symbol of the starfish in our logo is meaningful. We have learned to make a difference to even one friend or family coping with cancer. There are so many starfish washed up onto the seashore. Even though we can't reach them all, we can make a difference to at least one.

Mid Atlantic  
Cancer Support  
Center



[www.MACancerSupport.org](http://www.MACancerSupport.org)

## Sylvia's Christmas Story [ from page 1 ]



And then "that day" came on January 12, 2004. When, at 23 years old, I was diagnosed with stage four Hodgkin's lymphoma. The following days and weeks were full of questions. How could this have happened to me? Where could I get treatment? What would the treatment look like?

While I could go on and on about all of the awful things, I also recall the other side of cancer. My family gathered closely around me, giving me comfort, encouragement, and strength. My mom, Barbara, did everything and anything in her power to make sure I had what I needed- physically and emotionally. She did research and took notes in the doctor's office. And she made sure I was getting the best possible care. My dad, Charles, led our family silently but strongly as he always had. His duty was for a constant call for prayer. Ivan, my younger brother, made sure I always had the movies and snacks I wanted. The three of them were my around-the-clock caregivers. My older siblings, Julia and Jeremy, lived close by with their families and made sure I knew they could be there at a moment's notice.

Jason was the guy I met just two months before my diagnosis. We lived five hours apart and I was scared to tell him I was sick. Who would want to date a bald girl? But he showed his dedication from day one. He was at my first chemo treatment. And when my hair started to fall out, Jason shaved my head.

My ABVD treatment lasted 8 months. And on a late August afternoon, waiting with my mom and dad, Dr. Hawthorne came into the room and said, "The cancer is gone. You are cancer-free."

If you have been fortunate enough to hear those wonderful words, then you know the inexplicable feeling of relief and thankfulness. If you haven't heard those words yet, keep fighting because miracles happen! I want to share that no matter how bad it is you can always find something to be thankful for.

This lesson came even harder on Christmas day of 2006. My parents and Ivan were killed in a car accident. We had no opportunities for goodbyes. The next few weeks and months were a total blur and I was in survival mode again. But, the depth of love and faith we shared while I had cancer was still with me. It was at this time that I had to completely rely on Jesus to get me through. What other way was there?

Cancer taught me how to cope with difficult circumstances that we will face in this life. Cancer taught me how to rely on God and to feel His love when I felt nothing else. I am so thankful I had cancer because it gave me time with my family that I can never have back.

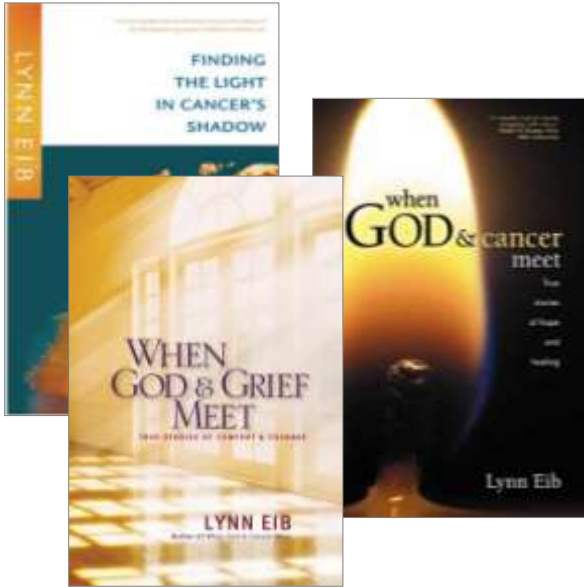
Christmas this year will be a little easier. My daughter, Charlie Ann, has just turned one and she has made my world much sweeter. Charlie looks at a picture of my parents and Ivan and smiles. It is as if she knows them, and this warms my heart.

This year as you celebrate with your families, be thankful. If you are in treatment and it is wearing on you, find something positive to reflect on or someone to thank for helping you through. If you are out of treatment, there is someone else that you can walk with on their journey. If you are a caregiver or supporter, know that your work is appreciated and much needed. You see, it is all related. Our journeys can be much easier if we can do it together.  
**Merry Christmas.**



## Picnic & Paddle

A sunny summer day and a calm Chesapeake Bay provided the setting for much needed rest and relaxation for some of our members. While Mary and Karen were invigorated by the fresh air, Al sang "The Ballad of Gilligan's Island" as Charlie's boat pulled away from the dock. Linda commented, "We should have sprung for real entertainment." It was only a 2 hour tour.



## Offering Emotional & Spiritual Support

By Gary Todd

On Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, we hosted a seminar with Lynn Eib, an author of inspirational books on cancer. Lynn an author, patient advocate, and a cancer survivor herself has written several books with powerful stories about cancer patients and their families.

The day began with laughter as Lynn always starts her seminars with jokes. For the Bible tells us that "a cheerful heart is good medicine." Lynn then shared with us her story of cancer, stories from her books, blessings which can come through cancer and how not to limit God.

I believe everyone left with hope and spiritual encouragement that God will be with us at every step of the journey.

Find out more about Lynn and her books at [www.cancerpatientadvocate.com](http://www.cancerpatientadvocate.com).

## When Fashion and Cancer Meet

Cancer Support Extends to a Fashion Runway to Mend Lives, Build Friendships, and Furnish Fun By Shannon Evans

On Saturday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, I was able to participate as a model in the Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center fashion show in the Annapolis Mall. Along with myself, there were many other cancer survivors. They had varying types of cancer: breast cancer, male breast cancer, prostate cancer, and my own melanoma.

When I was asked to be in the show, I hesitated – OK, maybe only for all of two seconds. I hesitated because I did not want to be out of my comfort zone. But, I agreed to be in the show for a few reasons: One, it is for a really good cause; Two, they agreed to keep me in dresses or skirts so that I would feel comfortable, and Three, How many opportunities is a 5-foot 2-inch girl going to have to do runway?

The one thing people say the most to me when they meet me and find out that I was diagnosed with Melanoma at 25 is that they think I have such a wonderful attitude about everything.

I found when I met the rest of the survivors/models that the thing that makes us survivors is that vibrant, feisty, great attitude. Everyone I talked to and got to know a little was so positive and encouraging of everyone else. What an awesome group!!

Lord and Taylor did a wonderful job providing us with clothes, makeup, and accessories. They thanked us with bags full of nice little goodies, and made the day exciting for everyone. And although the store provided gorgeous clothes for me to wear, I already had the perfect shoes to go with them!

I am really glad I participated in the show. It was not only a lot of fun, but it helped raise money for a good cause.





## Help Us Help Others

All Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center (MACSC) services are free and open to people with cancer, their families, and friends at any phase of their cancer treatment, recovery, survivorship process. Our activities are in support of, and in addition to, conventional medical treatment.

MACSC is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and donations made to the MACSC are tax deductible.

To donate, send your check to:

**MID-ATLANTIC  
CANCER SUPPORT CENTER**  
P.O. Box 2231  
Annapolis, MD 21404



[www.MACancerSupport.org](http://www.MACancerSupport.org)

## Cancer Survivor's Dinner

By Linda Kelly, MACSC Secretary

I'm always happy to be involved with our Cancer Survivor's Dinner as we celebrate with cancer survivors, their family, friends, and caregivers. Everyone is made to feel so special.

It was especially meaningful for me to give to John and Lynda Loveys the Bruce Alan Kelly Award (in memory of my late husband) in recognition of their dedication and service to the MACSC. I was also happy to recognize the Caregivers that were there, thanking them for their sacrifice, support, and faithful service to their loved ones.



The Cornerstone Church Prayer Shawl Ministry has partnered with us throughout the year. What a blessing their knitted and crocheted gifts have been.

*On behalf of everyone at Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center, thank you for making 2009 a successful year. We are so grateful for your generous support in the fight against cancer.*

Merry Christmas.  
Howard Dunkley, MACSC Board Chairman

