

Hope Lodge Reunion

There may have been storm clouds outside, but there were sunny smiles and good cheer inside Hope Lodge Worcester, as past and present guests gathered for

Reunion Weekend on June 9 and 10.

“I wouldn’t miss it for anything,” said Tom Brown of Georgia, a guest who stayed at the Lodge for three months while undergoing treatment for

a sarcoma tumor at the base of his spine. He left the Lodge recently, but welcomed the chance to be with his “second family” and to participate in the Relay For Life of Worcester as a keynote speaker.

“Just tell me when and where, and I’ll be there,” he said, when invited back to his home away from home. “I don’t know what would have become of me if I hadn’t been able to stay at Hope Lodge. I wouldn’t have been able to afford to come to Massachusetts for my treatment...I can honestly say that I wouldn’t be here talking to you today had it not been for Hope Lodge.”

Tom said the camaraderie the lodgers share was the best part of being at the Lodge. With everyone going through similar experiences,

there is a built-in support system that helps eliminate the isolation many patients feel.

“The biggest impact Hope Lodge has made on my life is the incredible bonding experience,” echoes Mark Scott, a Hope Lodge “frequent flyer” from Vermont, who returns for treatment for a limited time every four months. He said his favorite times are in the van

that shuttles Lodge guests to and from treatment.

“We come from all walks of life, brought together by cancer, a disease that has the power to alter your life and weaken you. But, because of the services Hope Lodge provides, we are able to lean on one another for support and encouragement, and that makes us stronger than cancer in ways we could never have imagined,” Mark said.

Most of the guests credit Hope Lodge and its staff for helping to make the difficult challenge of having cancer not only bearable but, incredibly, enjoyable as well.

“I wouldn’t wish a cancer diagnosis on anyone...but, still, this has been the most amazing experience of my life and I wouldn’t trade



The reunion brought together former Hope Lodge Worcester guests. From left to right: Bruce Newell of Florida, Victor Rosa of South Carolina, Mark Scott of Vermont, and Tom Brown of Georgia.

Calendar of Events

October 10 – Looks for Hope Fashion Show – Enjoy an evening of fine fashion, dining, and boutique shopping at the Crowne Plaza Worcester. Reserve your spot today for this annual fundraiser by calling Hope Lodge at 508.792.2985.

December 12 – Hope for the Holidays – It may be summer, but Hope Lodge staff and volunteers are already planning for the holiday season. This year’s event will include a tour of rooms throughout the Lodge, including guest bedrooms and common areas. Save the date to celebrate the holidays and the hope for a cancer-free world with your friends at Hope Lodge.

it for anything,” asserts Tom. To express his gratitude and help give back, he volunteers at the Hope Lodge in Atlanta, Georgia.

“To be able to give back the support and positive energy that I received while staying at Hope Lodge is immeasurable; it’s what life is all about,” Tom said with a smile.



Reunion guests were given a special welcome at the Relay For Life of Worcester, which took place the same weekend.

From the Desk of Debra Aharonian Hope Lodge Manager

“Hope is the thing with feathers – that perches in the soul – sings the tune without words – and never stops at all.”

— Emily Dickinson

This quote by the great poet Emily Dickinson continually reminds me that oftentimes in life hope is our only constant. Hope Lodge is certainly a place of great change. New guests arrive. Old guests return home. All our guests are different – different cancer diagnoses, different home states, different histories, and different futures. Yet, despite their differences, all guests are the same in one important way – they all are filled with hope for cancer cures and hope for a cancer-free world. In a time of constant change, it is comforting to know that hope will always be a part of the Lodge.

Speaking of changes, I'd like to take a few lines to update you on the accomplishments of the Hope Lodge Patient Service Task Force. Composed of dedicated volunteers, the Task Force has spent the last year evaluating Hope Lodge's programs and services, and brainstorming new ways to engage volunteers and guests. At the recommendation of the Task Force, a reunion was held in early June. Past guests traveled back to Hope Lodge to reconnect with old friends and enjoy a wonderful weekend. I could not help but notice that while the guests' lives have all changed since leaving the Lodge, they are all still full of hope. The Task Force is also closely examining the different patient and caregiver support groups and services available at the Lodge. While the groups and services may change to better serve our guests, you can be certain that hope will remain the integral component of everything we do here.

Warmest regards,
Deb



Reunion Weekend guests gather for brunch at the Crowne Plaza in Worcester.



Hope Lodge Director Debra Aharonian (center) shares laughs with Hope Lodge guests attending Relay For Life.



Hope Lodge Volunteer of the Year, Eileen Grosse (left), her husband Hank, and daughter Ayla.

Hope Lodge Volunteer Honored at Recognition Event

Eileen Grosse of Shrewsbury was awarded the Hope Lodge Volunteer of the Year Award for her unwavering dedication to the Lodge and its guests. A four-time breast cancer survivor and the owner of Ike's Den, a women's clothing boutique in Shrewsbury, Eileen has helped to raise

critical funds for the Lodge through the annual fundraiser, Looks for Hope. For the past three years she has provided all the women's clothing for the fashion show and has donated countless hours to ensure that the show goes off without a hitch. Eileen and her staff prepare all the clothing and Eileen serves as an emcee for the evening. With the help of family and friends, Eileen sells 20 percent of the show's tickets. Thanks in large part to Eileen's efforts, Looks for Hope raised \$25,000 last year.

Volunteers are always needed at the Lodge, especially Road to Recovery drivers. Please consider donating just one day a week to drive guests to and from their lifesaving treatments in Worcester and Boston, or a few hours on the weekend to drive guests to the grocery store, bank, and on other local errands. To learn more, contact Debra Aharonian, manager of the Lodge, at 508.792.2985 x 1.

A Year of Reflection: Cancer Survivor and Family Look Back on Hope Lodge Experience

It has been almost a year since Steven Boyd of Florida and his family walked through the doors of Hope Lodge Worcester. At the age of 32, Steven was diagnosed with a tumor behind his eye. The diagnosis came as a shock, as Steven's only health complaint was an occasional headache. When Steven's doctor recommended traveling to Boston for advanced treatment at the Proton Beam Therapy Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, Steven and his wife, Jennifer, immediately packed their three children into a camper and headed north. It was at the hospital that Steven first learned of Hope Lodge Worcester.

Steven was initially apprehensive about sharing a kitchen and bathroom with complete strangers at the Lodge, but his fears were unfounded. In fact, the kitchen immediately became one of the Boyd family's favorite spots in the house. "It is hard to believe that one year ago, I was scared to death of moving into an unknown house," explained Jennifer, who claims the entire Hope Lodge experience has broadened her perspective on life. "There is so much positive at the Lodge. Hope Lodge provided us with support and comfort during a



The Boyd family now at home in Florida after a stay at Hope Lodge Worcester.

very difficult time."

Steven has returned to work full time as a physician's assistant. He laughingly says that he now has a greater affection for his patients who have relocated from New England to warmer weather. He and Jennifer still keep in regular touch with other Lodge guests through letters and emails. And their three children frequently ask when

they will return to their "yellow house."

"My cancer experience was supposed to be one of the worst times of our lives, but it ended up being one of the best times for my entire family," said Steven. "In fact, Hope Lodge has been one of the highlights of our lives."

Steven's doctors have given him a positive prognosis; his last brain scan revealed that the tumor has not grown. In May, Steven and Jennifer traveled back to Massachusetts to share their Hope Lodge experience with a group of individuals interested in learning more about the Lodge. "We're more than happy to promote the Lodge whenever we can," Steven said. "The Lodge has given us so much. We want to give back, so that everyone facing a cancer diagnosis will have access to the comfort and support of Hope Lodge."

Hope Lodge Offers Cancer Support for Patients Receiving Advanced Cancer Treatments

The Francis H. Burr Proton Beam Therapy Center of the Massachusetts General Hospital is just one of five cancer treatment centers in the country offering the advanced technology of proton beam therapy – a treatment that is able to target tumors without significantly damaging surrounding tissues. As an associate radiation oncologist and expert in proton beam therapy, Dr. Norbert Liebsch treats some 100 patients each year. Many of these patients must travel great distances to receive this advanced treatment.

Before treatment begins, Dr. Liebsch and his staff first contact each patient to discuss the treatment process and answer questions. Dr. Liebsch has noticed that more patients, many of whom must receive daily treatments for two months, ask about affordable lodging. A proponent of Hope Lodge Worcester since 1989, Dr. Liebsch always includes the Lodge on his accommodation list.

While Dr. Liebsch recognizes that the financial benefits of Hope Lodge are great, he stresses that the Lodge also provides an instant network for his patients. "Many of my patients have very rare cancers – cancers that most people have never heard of," he explained. "By networking at the Lodge, my patients are able to learn how others are coping with the same disease." For many of Dr. Liebsch's patients, a "home away from home" is just a short distance from life-saving treatment thanks to Hope Lodge Worcester. For this, Dr. Liebsch extends his sincerest gratitude to all who make Hope Lodge possible.

Hope Lodge Boston Update Corner



Key volunteers and donors celebrated the formal groundbreaking of the AstraZeneca Hope Lodge Center in Boston.

The American Cancer Society is pleased to announce that since the formal groundbreaking on March 21, work is progressing for the AstraZeneca Hope Lodge Center in Boston. When it is opened by the Society in the fall of 2008, it will annually provide free lodging and support services to more than 1,500 cancer outpatients and their caregivers who must travel far from home for treatment in Boston. Located on the site of the former Vincent Memorial Hospital at 125 South Huntington Avenue, the new Lodge will provide 40 guest suites, a quality of life center, transportation, and outreach to the surrounding community. Currently, structural work is underway to restore major portions of the original 1907 building, and an obsolete 1950s addition has been demolished to make way for the new living spaces. Foundation excavation has begun in preparation for the addition of the structural steel later in the summer. An additional \$5 million is needed to complete the \$27 million project. For more details and photos visit www.cancer.org/hopelodgeboston.

Help Fill the Lodge with Warmth

As the price of gas continues to soar, so too does the cost of heating Hope Lodge. It costs approximately \$900 to fill the Lodge's oil tank. Depending on the weather, a full oil tank lasts for only three to four weeks. To make a donation and help keep the Lodge warm next winter, please contact Debra at 508.792.2985.



In Guests' Own Words

A past Hope Lodge guest recently wrote:

"You come here and you're wounded and you're scared. You go to the hospital and go through some things you don't really want to. But when you come back to the Lodge, it's warm and it's comfortable and you feel safe. When you leave it's almost like being released from a cocoon that has helped you to heal."

Do you have a quote you'd like to share about your Hope Lodge experience? We would love to hear from you! Please contact Debra Aharonian at debra.aharonian@cancer.org or mail your quote to Hope Lodge Worcester, 7 Oak Street, Worcester, MA 01609.

Hope Lodge Wish List

The Lodge is in need of the following items:

- Gift cards to Target, Wal-Mart, CVS, and Walgreens
- Gift cards to Worcester area restaurants
- Gift cards to local grocery stores
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Laundry detergent
- Postage stamps
- Coffee (regular)

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