




**JENNIE EDMUNDSON  
FOUNDATION**



**METHODIST**  
JENNIE EDMUNDSON  
CANCER CENTER

Friday - Saturday  
August 4-5, 2023



# Jennie Edmundson Foundation *Spirit of Courage*

A Benefit for the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital  
Cancer Center Charitable Patient Care Fund



*2023 Spirit of Courage Recipients*

Rita Epperson

Brent Malskeit

Fran Shorey

Marlene Turner



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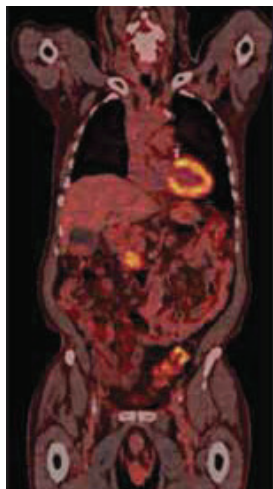
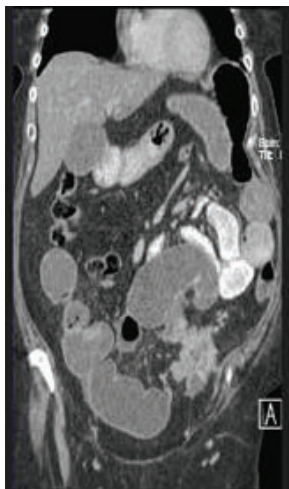


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# Spirit of Courage Past Recipients

We would like to recognize and thank our past recipients for their continued support and contributions.

## 2021

Donna Elliff  
Deb Potter  
Jake Powers  
Kevin Rutland

## 2020-2022

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, new recipients were not selected. All past Spirit of Courage recipients were honored during the event. With the resurgence of COVID in 2021, 2021 recipients were honored in 2022.

## 2019

Deb Blatt  
Dr. Darcey Butts  
Bobbi Calderon  
Bob Steele

## 2018

Erin Berkley  
José Hernandez  
Joan Minikus  
Glen Mitchell

## 2017

Mark Engelke  
John McCreddie  
Mindy Miller  
George Smith

## 2016

Teresa Benson  
Karen Hansen  
Jenyi Knudsen-Bergsten\*  
Amber Williams

## 2015

Rod Courtier  
Richard Daberkow  
Lucy Beall Graeme  
Melanie Ryan

## 2014

Kara Dunphy  
Dr. Lori Platt  
Dolores Silkworth  
Marilyn Weber\*

## 2013

Marcia Antworth  
Les Green  
Randy Grudle  
Laura Pattermann

## 2012

Marcia Keith  
Julianne Morton  
Julie Nickolisen  
Caryl Martinez

## 2011

Gracie Hays  
Edd Leach  
Joel Peck\*  
Horst Rossbund

## 2010

Callie Earlywine  
Karen Krause  
John Scherle  
Kathy Whitson\*

## 2009

Cliff "Rink" Holly  
Brady Jorgensen  
Carol Reeder

## 2008

Pat Andersen  
Rick Carlson  
Ann Hartman  
John Nelson

## 2007

John Allen  
Emma Chance  
Jan Lookabill  
Tom Schmitt

## 2006

Gary Fiscus  
Hazel Gammon\*  
Dr. John Okerbloom

## 2005

Shirley Hurd  
Pat Penn  
Janet Scherle  
Dr. Mary Schermann

## 2004

Sue Johnson

## 2003

Verne Welch

*\*Denotes Lifetime  
Achievement  
Award recipient*

# Welcome Letter

## Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 21st annual Spirit of Courage Gala!

This year's event is touched by sadness before it even gets underway. One of our Spirit of Courage recipients, Brent Malskeit, passed away July 5, three days after his 24th birthday. He bravely fought cancer for two years, and as we are reminded, not every cancer battle results in victory.

I got to meet Brent and his parents, visiting with them in their home and at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital on several occasions. Every time, I was impressed by Brent's determination and by the strength of his parents, Amy and Matt. He also was bolstered by the support of his sister, Morgan, and many other family members and friends. Brent's story is one of incredible strength and endurance, and it is told later in this program. So tonight, please keep Brent and his family in your hearts and prayers. He cannot be with us, but his Spirit of Courage certainly is.



Tara Slevin

Also within these pages you will find profiles of fellow Spirit of Courage recipients: Rita Epperson, Fran Shorey and Marlene Turner. In addition, please read about the newest programs at the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center designed to raise awareness and provide early detection of several forms of cancer. And, there is an article detailing how vital the support of our sponsors, donors and volunteers is to the work of the Jennie Edmundson Foundation.

Tonight we honor four courageous people, and we remember those who are no longer with us. We also honor the dozens of physicians, surgeons, therapists, nurses, medical caregivers and support staff who make the Cancer Center a special place. And, we thank our celebrity guests and sponsors, many of whom have been with us for years.

The Foundation couldn't make a difference without your help. We thank all our sponsors for their continuing generosity. We thank the executive board, committee chairs and volunteers for contributing their time and talents.

With sincere gratitude,

*Tara Slevin*

Tara Slevin  
Chief Philanthropy Officer  
Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital & President,  
Jennie Edmundson Foundation



# Recipients, You Inspire Us All!

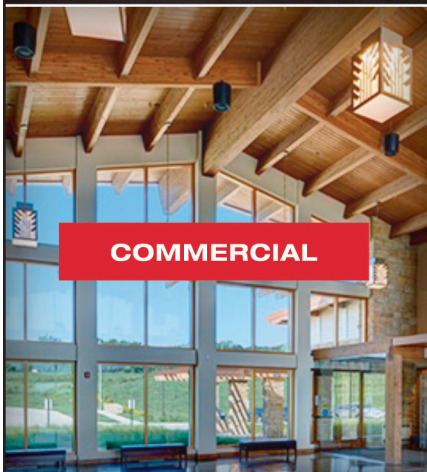
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congratulates Spirit of Courage for  
20 years of raising funds to assist  
patients fighting cancer.



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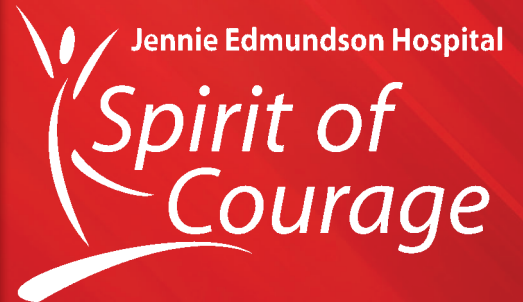
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## *2023 Summer Fundraising Events*

**Saturday, June 24**

**WHEELS OF COURAGE CAR SHOW**

Standing Together in the Fight Against Cancer

**Saturday, August 5**

**21ST ANNUAL SPIRIT OF COURAGE**

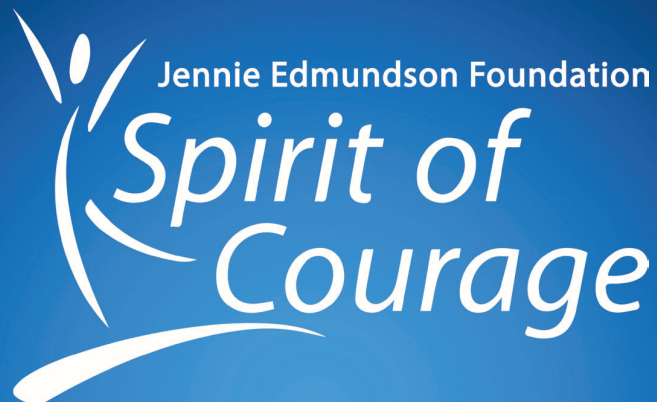
A benefit for the Charitable Patient Care Fund, providing assistance to patients with expenses associated with diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

**SHOTGUN SCRAMBLE CELEBRITY GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Dodge Riverside Golf Club

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Spirit of Courage Recipient Awards will be presented to Rita Epperson, Brent Malskeit, Fran Shorey and Marlene Turner.



*Congratulations to this year's Spirit of Courage Award Recipients:*  
Rita Epperson • Brent Malskeit • Fran Shorey • Marlene Turner

As we embark on our 21st annual Spirit of Courage, the Jennie Edmundson Foundation Board of Directors would like to recognize each of our past recipients for their courage, inspiration and strength! We are honored to be a part of your journey and blessed to work alongside you and your families in the fight against cancer.



Spirit of Courage supporters, Donna and Edd Leach

## Jennie Edmundson Foundation's Impact

# People Make the Difference For Countless Cancer Patients

– Article by Nick Schinker

The annual Spirit of Courage weekend, Wheels of Courage auto shows, Pink Out fundraisers every October, and other events are all about people – the cancer patients and families who benefit from the funds that are raised, and the generous donors, volunteers, businesses and organizations that selflessly support the Jennie Edmundson Foundation's efforts.

"It's overwhelming, the number of people and businesses that willingly give of their time and work so very hard to make these events a success," says Tara Slevin, chief philanthropy officer at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital and president, Jennie Edmundson Foundation. "Every year, so many people step forward and offer to do things I could never ask them to do. And the next year, they offer to do even more."

Slevin says that in the 21 years since the inception of the Spirit of Courage events, over \$2 million has been raised for the Spirit of Courage Patient Care Fund. Every dollar donated to the fund provides assistance to cancer patients who need help paying for

medications, treatments and insurance deductibles, as well as everyday living expenses such as groceries, rent and gas.

"There are so many extenuating circumstances that make fighting cancer even more difficult," Slevin says. "I learned of a patient whose home was destroyed in a fire and all she had left were the clothes on her back. She came in for treatment and told the therapists she was worried about wearing the same clothes every day. They reached out to the Foundation and we were able to secure a \$500 gift card to Walmart so she could get some needed essentials."

Slevin says the Foundation's work would not be possible without donors and sponsors like Edd and Donna Leach. Edd Leach owns Leach Camper Sales, and in 2011 was honored as a Spirit of Courage recipient, after undergoing surgery and treatment for prostate cancer in 2009.

"Edd and Donna have been such wonderful supporters of Spirit of Courage, as well as Pink Out and Jennie Edmundson," Slevin says. "For the last several years,



they have hosted the kickoff party at their home in June to welcome the newest Spirit of Courage recipients into the family."

Edd Leach has been in the camper business since 1969. "It's always been a family business, and in the same location ever since it opened," he says. "People keep coming back because of the personalized service they get."

That service is delivered by many longtime employees, he says. "We have one woman who has been here 38 years, and another for 33 years," he says. "We have guys who've been here 25, 28, 30 years. That kind of loyalty builds relationships with our customers."

Donna Leach says that same positive reputation is shared by the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center and the Jennie Edmundson Foundation. She says the couple support the Foundation because of its direct impact on cancer care. "One of the things that set the Jennie Edmundson Foundation apart is the fact that all the money raised goes to the patients," she says. "With so many other organizations, the donations go straight to overhead and salaries."

She says it is rewarding for her and Edd to be able to take part in Spirit of Courage each year. "It amazes me how, even in the midst of fighting cancer or being in recovery, so many of the patients we meet will write us letters of gratitude," she says. In addition, Leach Camper Sales provides a space with a display table for the Foundation at the annual Omaha Boat, Sports and Travel Show, and at all the Leach Camper Sales open houses.

Edd Leach borrows from an African proverb to explain why he and Donna continue to support the Foundation and its efforts. "I believe it takes a community to get things done," he says. "Being successful members of this community, it's our responsibility to give back."

Slevin says Edd and Donna Leach are not alone in their generosity. "We are able to fulfill a growing number of needs for patients and families because of the continued support of our sponsors and donors," she says. "It's more than money to our patients. It means hope and healing."

“People keep coming back because of the personalized service they get.”

Edd Leach



***At Leach Camper Sales we are proud to offer our congratulations to the Jennie Edmundson Hospital Foundation Spirit of Courage honorees. Leach Camper Sales has served the Council Bluffs and surrounding area since 1962 and we have always valued the opportunity to support organizations like Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital, their programs and their dedicated staff.***



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2019 RECIPIENT

# Deb Bladt

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# Rita Epperson – Honoree



Rita Epperson

When Rita Epperson was told she has Stage 4 pancreatic cancer that had metastasized to her liver, it sent a shock wave that rippled beyond her immediate family to the countless members of her “family” at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital, where she had worked for 40 years.

“Everyone at Jennie is awesome,” Epperson says. “They’re so good at everything they do, and they work together to deliver the best care anywhere. It’s a team and a family. You grow with them. You celebrate their accomplishments, and you’re there when someone is hurting.

“The Jennie family has been very supportive of me, caring for me and about me since Day One.”

Rita worked four jobs in her 40 years at Jennie Edmundson Hospital, including serving as an administrative assistant for the Director of Nursing Services for 22 years. In the same role for the Director of the Emergency Department for three years, before retiring from outpatient physical therapy

in October of 2022.. She was responsible for many advancements in policies and procedures, and played an integral role in the development and management of annual prostate, breast/cervical and skin cancer screenings, as well as pulmonary vascular disease (PVD) screenings.

For many years, Epperson has taken part in Spirit of Courage events as a volunteer. This year, she is honored to be a Spirit of Courage recipient. “It is an amazing event,” she says. “It does so much good for cancer patients, the hospital and the community. I am flattered to be a part of it.”

An avid runner, the 63-year-old is one of seven women who share a love of running and each other, meeting to train and compete, and to tell stories about their families over Saturday morning coffee. “I have done over a dozen half-marathons and three marathons,” Epperson says, proudly. “I did the Omaha Marathon, the Boston Marathon, and one that’s called Grandma’s Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota.”

## Special Thanks

*Thank you for your unique and vast ways of showing encouragement and support throughout this cancer journey.*

Family – Each of you bring me great joy and love, always there for me. Love you endlessly! HUGS!

Dr. Hussain and all of the staff at Heartland Oncology as well as Dr. Stearns and my medical team – you not only care for me, but also about me. You are all amazing!

Neighbors, classmates, Jennie family, the running gals, friends old and new as well as near and far -- what would I do without you? So thankful for each of you!

Jennie Edmundson Foundation and Spirit of Courage Committee-- you work endlessly behind the scenes. Thank you!

My pup Berkley – my little buddy

University of Iowa Women’s Basketball – you entertained me all season long!

Previous SOC and current SOC recipients as well as all of my chemo buddies, you inspire me!

Pastor Benson – always reassuring with faith and guidance.

Everyone present at the gala tonight—proof of your dedication to help all cancer patients, providing important funds and hope! Hope is for everyone!

God – for the strength, comfort, guidance and enduring promise.

To everyone – thank you for your continuous prayers! I am grateful and blessed. I can conquer anything!

“I’ve built a boat, let it rain!”



She and her “running girls” met up in January 2022, to motivate each other during the winter months and to plan for competing in a half-marathon in Lincoln in October. “My training consisted mostly of running and doing small weights at home,” Epperson recalls. “But I wanted to strengthen my core, so I joined the YMCA. The membership included three sessions with a trainer, and work on heavy weights.”

She began her session in February, but by April she was experiencing pain in her stomach and back. “I like ice cream a lot, usually before bed,” she says. “But I started getting nauseated after I ate it. It got so bad I had to move from the bed to the couch just to try and get comfortable.”

Epperson had grown up on a dairy farm near Shelby, Iowa, with her brother and three sisters, and had never experienced a problem with lactose in her life. Her brother, Steve, had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and died in 2021. When she told her sister about her stomach and back pain, they recalled how he, too, had experienced severe pain.

“It was early May, I was working the late shift and I was miserable,” Epperson says. “I called my doctor the next day.”

She met with Rachel Stearnes, DO, a family medicine doctor at Methodist Physicians Clinic in Council Bluffs, and agreed to some lab tests. That was on a Friday. On Monday, the doctor’s office called and told Epperson that her liver enzymes “were way out of range.” They scheduled an abdominal ultrasound at Jennie Edmundson for the following Thursday. That same day, Dr. Stearnes ordered a CT scan. On Friday, Epperson was asked to come to Dr. Stearnes’ office.

“When Dr. Stearnes came in, she told me, ‘This is a hard day for a doctor,’ and we shared hugs and tears for a few moments,” Epperson says. “The ultrasound and the CT, they both showed a large tumor on the pancreas and multiple lesions on the liver.”

Epperson was given her choice of medical facilities and specialists. “I said, I want to be at Jennie.”

She met with Sakeer Hussain, M.D., medical oncologist/hematologist at Heartland Oncology and Hematology, which has a longstanding



partnership with the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital Cancer Center. A liver biopsy, along with digital positron emission tomography/computer tomography (PET/CT) scans and genetic testing confirmed the diagnosis of Stage 4 cancer.

Epperson and her husband, Kevin, have been married 40 years. They have four children – Heath, Brett, Ryan and Amy – and four grandchildren. “The hardest thing was telling our kids,” she says. “They all loved their Uncle Steve, and they were so happy when he did well with chemotherapy for a while, but then the cancer came back with a vengeance and it got him. I knew they’d be scared for me. And I knew they’d be there for me.”

Her grandchildren have also rallied around her. “Allison is nine, Luke is seven, Levi is five, Kate is four and my newest grandson Seth,” she says. “We get together most every Sunday evening and have a meal and game night. And the kids make me get well cards.”

Epperson began chemotherapy June 1, 2022, and continues to endure the treatments in the hope they will slow the progression of the cancer.

“All the care and attention I’ve received has helped me to believe in myself, throughout this cancer journey.”

*Rita Epperson*



"The cancer has changed my life in many ways," she says. "I don't run anymore, which I really miss. That was a big part of my life for a long time. But the chemotherapy does kind of knock your socks off for a few days with fatigue and other side effects, and the fatigue takes away the drive to get out and do things."

She says she misses eating her favorite foods, especially ice cream. "Chemo changes the taste of everything," she says.

At the same time, her spirits have been bolstered by the continuous outpouring of support from her family and her friends. "My siblings, my extended family, both my mom and dad's sides, all the cousins, aunts and uncles," she says. "We grew up in small farming communities. You knew your cousins; you knew your neighbors. We all still care about each other. You don't grow out of that."

She says her neighbors have shown her an outpouring of concern and compassion. "It has helped make days better for me," she says.

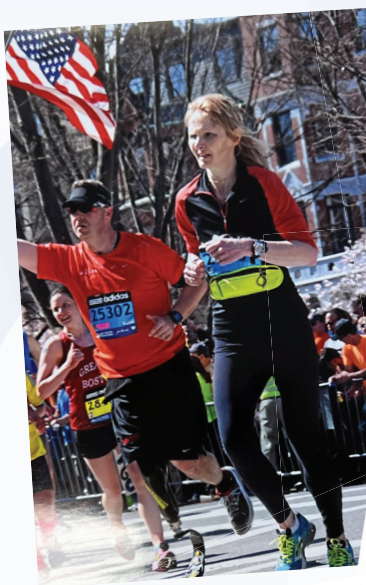
Her "running girls" have also been supportive. "They know, like with running, it's too easy to quit. You have to keep going, and that's kind of how we look at this cancer. You just have to keep fighting and working through it. They're my friends and they'll always be there for me."

As will her Jennie Edmundson family. "When I retired, it was a happy/sad day," she says. "I miss those people. They are the most caring, compassionate, dedicated and loyal people I know. The patients always come first. It's all real and true."

Experiencing that care now as a patient has made Jennie Edmundson and the Cancer Center even more special, Epperson says. "The doctors, the oncology nurses, the lab techs, the medical assistants; everyone is outstanding," she says. "All the care and attention I've received has helped me to believe in myself."

"The odds may not be very good, but they never make me feel that way," she says. "I love them."

She wants everyone to know how deeply grateful she is for the prayers and acts of kindness she has received. "People have gone out of their way to try to make me feel better," she says. "Knowing that they care makes all the difference."





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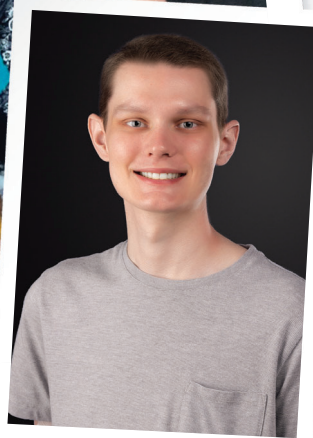
Sakeer Hussain, M.D

Theresa Evans, APRN

Tammy Johnson, APRN



# Brent Malskeit - Honoree



Brent Malskeit

## Special Thanks

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our family and friends for the overwhelming love, support, and generosity during these past 2 years. We are beyond grateful and love you all very much.

To Brent's Medical Team, thank you for the exceptional care you provided to Brent and our family.

To Jennie Edmundson Foundation/ Spirit of Courage, thank you for your guidance and patience in sharing Brent's story, especially after his passing.

We feel very blessed to have all of you in our lives.

Matt, Amy and Morgan

*Editor's note: Sadly, Brent Malskeit lost his battle with cancer on July 5, 2023. This article was written in June, and Brent and his family were able to review it prior to his passing. He was truly an example of the Spirit of Courage.*

—Tara Slevin  
Chief philanthropy officer,  
Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital  
President, Jennie Edmundson Foundation

In 2017, Brent Cole Malskeit was crowned homecoming king at Lewis Central High School. Standing beside his parents, Amy and Matt, a photograph captured the moment and Brent's beaming smile. Tall, handsome and happy, he was looking forward to a life of opportunities.

Four years later, cancer took hold of his dreams and refused to let go.

After high school, Brent spent a year studying at Iowa State University, then came back to Council Bluffs to attend Iowa Western and its surgical technician program. He got a job as a Certified Nursing Assistant and went to work at the Risen Son Christian Village assisted living and memory care facility not far from his home.

In April 2021, Brent began having trouble keeping food down, followed by a loss of weight. He visited with his doctor, who theorized it might be acid reflux and prescribed medicine to treat it, but it had little if any effect.

Brent followed that visit with a trip to Midwest Gastrointestinal Associates, where an endoscopy procedure detected an inflammation in his stomach. That led to Heartland Oncology & Hematology, which has a longstanding



“There are always good and bad days with a cancer journey, so it is important to treasure the good parts of every day.” *Brent Malskeit*

relationship with the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center.

Brent met with Nurse Practitioner Kristin Markel, and a positron emission tomography (PET) scan and a second endoscopy with an ultrasound were performed. “The results were not good,” Brent recalls. “It found I had Stage 3 stomach cancer, and that the lymph nodes were also involved.”

He says he was shocked and scared; so were his parents, and his older sister, Morgan. “All we could think of was, ‘How could this be happening?’” his mother says. “It was never on the radar, especially for someone his age.”

Brent began chemotherapy on June 2, 2021, to prepare for surgery. The anticipated four rounds turned into eight. He lost even more weight.

“It pretty much knocked me out,” he says. “I came home from a friend’s house crying. I couldn’t even open my eyes. My parents had to feed me because I couldn’t.”

Markel and Sakeer Hussain, M.D., Medical Oncologist/Hematologist at Heartland Oncology & Hematology, collaborated with doctors at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) to determine the best course of treatment for Brent. They decided, in consultation with Brent and his parents, to perform surgery at UNMC and for Brent to undergo chemotherapy treatments at Methodist Jennie Edmundson and Heartland Oncology.

On October 21, Brent underwent surgery to remove his stomach, spleen, and part of his pancreas and liver. He was to be hospitalized for 10 days, then to recover at home, but things didn’t go as planned.

“I had severe abdominal pain, and I couldn’t tolerate tube feedings, so they started TPN,” an acronym for total parenteral nutrition, a method of feeding through a vein that bypasses the

gastrointestinal tract, he recalls. “Instead of 10 days, I finally made it home just in time for Christmas.”

Continued difficulty with swallowing stretched his recovery to four months, but in April 2022, Brent returned to work at Risen Son. Technically, his cancer was in remission. But by October, he was experiencing back and neck pain. Subsequent scans showed three new areas of cancer.

Brent’s list of complications grew. Additional chemotherapy led to a shortness of breath. He had trouble eating, which led to “trial and error, and a lot of protein shakes.” In December 2022, his feeding tube was replaced, however, once again he was unable to tolerate the tube feedings or oral foods, and he was put back on TPN.

In February this year, when Brent was having continued difficulty swallowing, an endoscopy found that the area where he previously had surgery was narrow and twisted, preventing food and pills from going down. On March 9, a stent was placed in the esophagus and small intestine.

Also this year, rescanning found that fluid had begun collecting around his left lung. “They told us that the cancer had moved into his upper chest area,” says Amy. “They drained 750 ml of fluid, and it tested positive for cancer cells.” A new chemotherapy regimen was started.

In June, doctors determined that the cancer had continued to progress, and Brent entered hospice care.

Though the news he received was rarely good,





“I really could not do any of this without my parents and sister, and their unconditional love and support.” *Brent Malskeit*

the 24-year-old continued to fight the disease with courage and resolve beyond his years. His parents admired that in him.

Watching what Brent was going through has not been easy for his parents and sister. Amy is a registered nurse who reviews claims for the Lincoln Financial Group and has been able to work from home. Matt, who teaches second grade in Glenwood, also spends as much time with Brent as possible, as does his sister, Morgan.

“I really could not do any of this without my parents and sister, and their unconditional love and support,” Brent says. “There are always good and bad days with a cancer journey, so it is important to treasure the good parts of every day.”

He has also been comforted by his godmother, Kim Malskeit, the wife of Matt’s cousin who fought her own battle with cancer and is currently in remission. “She has been very supportive,” Brent

says. “She understands.”

He says he is humbled by being named a Spirit of Courage recipient. “I was a little surprised, because I’m so young,” he says. “I appreciate it. It’s a nice sentiment.”

Brent and his family are deeply grateful for the support they have received, from family and friends who have reached out, providing meals and other encouragement, to the medical professionals at UNMC, Jennie Edmundson and Heartland Oncology & Hematology.

“The nurses at Jennie have been so great,” Amy says. “They’ve been like a mother to him, and I can’t ask any more than that. We also are so thankful for Kristin (Markel) and Dr. Hussain. They knew, because he was so young, to reach out to UNMC and work together to get him the best care that he needed.”



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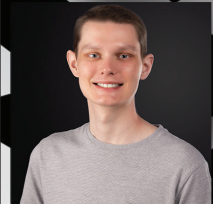
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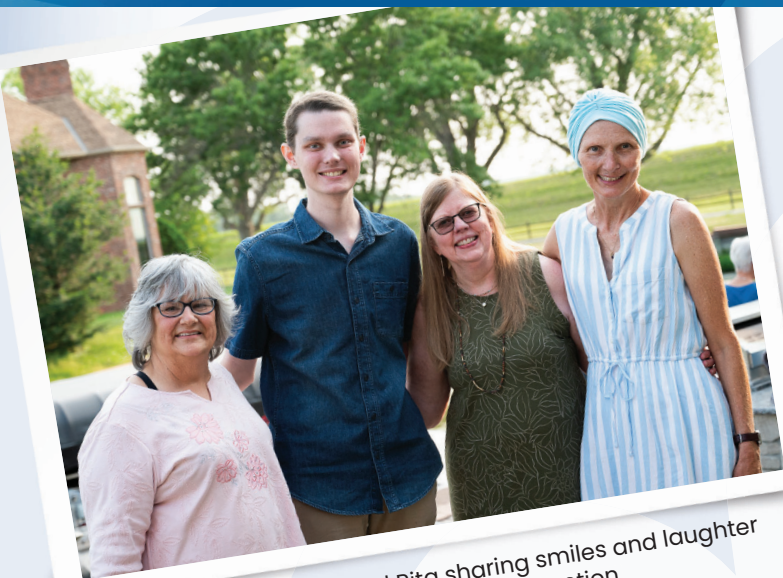
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# Capturing Memories & Moments



Marlene, Brent, Fran and Rita sharing smiles and laughter at the 2023 Welcome Reception.



Sterling Knight and volunteer caddy Heather Alexander enjoy an un-fore-gettable day at the golf tournament.



Celebrity Guests take the stage in a show of support for local cancer patients



One of the many highlights of Spirit of Courage is honoring all of our past recipients



Spirit of Courage recipients gather at the home of Edd and Donna Leach to share support as they catch up





Jenene Vandenburg, CNO at Jennie, delivering the good news to live auction winners.



The night is still young! Celebrities and attendees keep the celebration going.

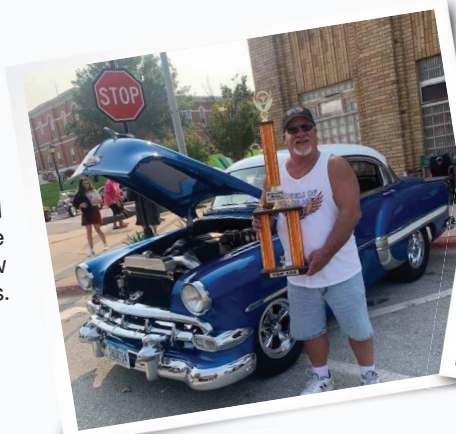


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# Fran Shorey - Honoree



Fran Shorey

## Special Thanks

**People who helped me back in 1989 who are no longer with us:**

Dr. Karen Proberts - Breast Surgeon  
Dr. John Okerbloom - Oncologist  
Dr. Michael Chaput - Anesthesiologist  
Karen Stonehouse - Radiation Therapy Technician.

**Cancer thank yous:**

Dr. Robert Warner, Dr. Michael Zlomke,  
Dr. Annabel Galva, Tammy Johnson,  
Dr. Jennifer Stone, Mary Ellen Bartels -  
JEH Physical Therapy, Steve Baumert.

Oncology nurses and staff- Mary, Lyla, Cindy and Gail. So many nurses and hospital staff and Mammogram Technicians.

Therapy dog opportunities - Tara Slevin, Sam Fragosso, Rachel Reis, JoAnn Jensen, Jen Cody and Gail Kenkel.

Rizzo - who provides therapy for not only me, but for others, and who has given me a new purpose and opportunity to give back to others who may be going through their own life challenges.

Soulmate and best friend, my husband, John.

My family: Laura, Pam, Jon and my granddaughter, Aspen.

So many friends who have provided comfort, support, love and laughter over the years.

A "farm girl" from southeast Iowa, Fran Shorey grew up walking her family's bean fields. Perhaps that was where she was exposed to chemical pesticides or something else that led to her first diagnosis of breast cancer in 1989; no one knows.

What is certain is that through her initial mastectomy and treatment, and two subsequent diagnoses of breast cancer in 2014 and 2017, she has witnessed how cancer care has evolved, and how its diagnosis and treatment at the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center have remained on the leading edge.

Now in remission, Shorey is keeping a personal promise to give back to Jennie Edmundson and its patients by starting a pet therapy service at the hospital - along with her dog, Rizzo. "My goal," she says, "is to provide comfort and warmth to people going through what I went through."

Shorey, 68, went through a lot in her cancer journey - beginning when she was only 34 years old and the mother of two young daughters.

She went to college in Kirksville, Mo., attending Northeast Missouri State (now Truman State University), where she earned a degree in elementary education and her K-8 teaching certificate. It's also where she met John, her husband, who also became a teacher. They were married July 30, 1977.

Although she had served as a student teacher in Kirksville, a full-time teaching job she thought had been promised never materialized, so she took a job teaching seventh and eighth grades in a rural school about a 45-minute drive from Kirksville. "It was a small school," she recalls. "Seventh grade



“More than courageous,  
I’ve learned to be tough,  
and to ask a lot of  
questions.” *Fran Shorey*

was on one side of the room, and eighth grade on the other side, and I taught both grades, all subjects.”

Education proved to be her calling, as she continued teaching for 32 years, moving to Council Bluffs and retiring from the Council Bluffs Community School District in 2012, and continuing to teach part-time at St. Albert Catholic School for another four years.

She and John are the parents of two girls, Laura and Pam. They were only 5 and 3 years old, respectively, when Fran’s cancer story began.

“I was 34 years old, and coincidentally, it was 34 years ago, in 1989,” she recalls. “It had really started two years earlier, when I noticed differences in my right breast. Things have changed so much since then. Today, I would have been watched more closely, right away.”

But because of her age, and no history of breast cancer in her family, “I was told it was likely fibrocystic changes in my breast,” she says. “Deep down, I knew something wasn’t right with my body. Today, they would have persisted with testing.”

An incident in November 1988 again brought the issue to the forefront. “My oldest, Laura, was in the back seat and she asked me to crank her window up,” Shorey says. “We didn’t have electric windows back then. So I reached around and instantly felt pain. I had torn my rotator cuff.”

Treatment included physical therapy, and one of her therapists was Steve Baumert, who later served as president and CEO of Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital. Shorey and her husband had met Baumert and his wife, Kathy, when the two couples attended Lamaze classes in 1983 at Jennie Edmundson.

“After I had been in therapy for a while, I told him that I had felt a kernel under my armpit, and he said, ‘What kernel?’ He examined it and said, ‘I don’t like that. Let’s get that checked further,’” Shorey says.



After a biopsy in March 1989 determined the tumor she had felt was malignant, she underwent a mastectomy of her right breast. “They told me young women don’t do well with breast cancer,” she says. “I went out in May and bought Christmas presents for the girls, and hid them away in case I didn’t make it.”

She underwent weeks of radiation treatments, a year of chemotherapy and then seven years of the drug, Tamoxifen. “It all hit me really hard, because I was so young,” she recalls. “I basically was forced into menopause at age 35.”

Because John was teaching and coaching at St. Albert, Shorey had to drive herself to many of her treatment sessions – and take her daughters with her. “The nurses, receptionists and radiation technicians were wonderful,” she says. “They gave the girls candy and coloring books and told me not to worry about anything but getting well.”

Shorey was treated at Heartland Oncology & Hematology, a longtime partner of the Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center. It was founded in 1983 by John Okerbloom, M.D., a graduate of the Medical School at the University of Iowa who had completed an oncology fellowship in Des Moines. She was also treated by Karen Proberts, M.D., a general surgeon who had completed a fellowship in surgical oncology at Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.



"In my mind, things don't happen by chance," she says. "People are brought into your life for a reason. Steve Baumert, Dr. Okerbloom and Dr. Proberts – these people were there for a reason."

While seeing Dr. Proberts, Shorey got to meet another doctor who was new to Jennie Edmundson – Michael Zlomke M.D., general surgeon and today the medical director of the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Breast Health Center.

Twenty-five years passed after Shorey's first bout with breast cancer. In 2014, Annabel Galva, M.D., radiologist with Diagnostic Radiology PC, and member of the Breast Health Center's diagnostic and treatment team, detected a small tumor on Shorey's left breast during a routine mammogram. Dr. Zlomke performed a lumpectomy to remove the tumor.

Three years later, Dr. Galva found another spot during an examination and prescribed a mastectomy of the left breast. This time, her doctors determined there was no need for radiation or chemotherapy.

But Shorey did feel a need – to give back to the people and the place she feels saved her life. And she is doing it alongside her dog, Rizzo, by volunteering pet therapy visits at Jennie Edmundson.

Rizzo is an English cream golden retriever that Shorey obtained as a puppy through a health therapy dog business, then the two completed training together to become certified as a pet therapy team. Shorey also completed volunteer

training at Jennie Edmundson. "I got my volunteer jacket," she says, chuckling, "and I had all my shots."

The service has begun, and Shorey and Rizzo, named for Anthony Rizzo, a former Chicago Cubs player who survived limited-stage classical Hodgkin lymphoma; started by visiting hospital staff and now are visiting patients, including patients at the Cancer Center and Breast Health Center. "We belong there," she says.

She appreciates being named a Spirit of Courage recipient. "I think any cancer patient has to be courageous," she says. "More than courageous, I've learned to be tough, and to ask a lot of questions.

"When I had my first bout," she says, "my girls were so young, I was determined I had to be there for them. And I still am, thanks to the help of my husband and the people at Jennie Edmundson Hospital."







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## Methodist Radiation Oncology Team



From left:

Alireza Mirmiran, MD

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The physicians and staff of Methodist Radiation Oncology are honored to care for cancer survivors at three Methodist locations in Council Bluffs, Omaha and Fremont.



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# Marlene Turner – Honoree



Marlene Turner

## Special Thanks

Thank you to Dr. Mukherjee who guided me through my journey and was part of my team along with Dr. Merritt, Dr. Popa and Dr. Chiu. Because of them, I have been cancer free for over a year.

Thank you to my co-workers who covered my shifts when I was unable to work and to all my nurses who helped make my job easier when I came back to work. I love my Jennie family.

Thank you to my daughter Jamie for all of the help she gave me and most of all for being the calming force for her dad during my biopsies and surgeries.

But most of all I want to thank my husband, Larry. He took me to every appointment and every treatment. He did all the cooking, cleaning and laundry at home. He helped me in every possible way so I could recover.

I am truly blessed by the people I have in my life.

When she was 37, Marlene Turner began classes at Iowa Western to earn an associate's degree in nursing. She went to work at Jennie Edmundson Hospital with the intention of staying one year, then moving to a larger hospital. Instead, she stayed 31 years, working through the COVID-19 pandemic, and after being diagnosed with lung cancer in 2021.

"I helped care for countless patients," Turner says, "and then I became one."

Very little about cancer care today resembles what it was like when Turner started at Jennie Edmundson in August 1991, as a nurse on the fifth floor, serving oncology, medical-surgery (med-surg) and neurology patients.

She held a variety of jobs before coming to Jennie Edmundson. She worked in a packing house – for one day. You really don't want to know what happened there; let's just say she wasn't cut out for it.

She worked at a bingo parlor in Omaha. And, she was a long-distance switchboard operator in Lincoln. Then, she decided to try something else. She enrolled at Iowa Western, and in two years obtained an associate degree in nursing.

After graduation, she was accepted at St. Joseph/Creighton Hospital, "but it was on a diabetic floor," she recalls, "and I was more interested in med-surg."



A friend told her that Jennie Edmundson was hiring and was offering a \$1,000 signing bonus. "I thought it might be good to get a year of experience and then move on," she says. "I stayed my entire career, 14 years on the cancer floor and then as house supervisor for 17 years – all on the night shift. I loved that job."

Back then, chemotherapy patients remained hospitalized while undergoing treatment. "They stayed in all five days to receive chemo," she says. "Leukemia patients stayed in for months. Because of that, we really got to know the patients, and we got to know their families as well."

She remembers the first time one of her patients died. He had bladder cancer, and though she had cautioned his family that his condition was worsening, they had already left to make the hour drive home, and most likely wouldn't be able to make it back in time. "I hated the idea of him dying alone," she says, "so I sat with him until he passed."

Working the night shift meant that Turner, who is known for her quick wit and leadership skills, and her fellow nurses had to work as a team. "We had nobody but each other to depend on," she says. "We had to get along, and we became very close-knit because of it."

That camaraderie became even more apparent in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We were so short-staffed, and as house supervisor, I saw how hard they had to work," Turner says. "I felt so bad for them. You can't imagine what those nurses went through."

Despite making rounds in every area of the hospital, Turner never contracted COVID. "But I wasn't constantly working with it," she says. "I would start IVs for the patients and do other tasks, but I wasn't beside them my entire shift. And I wore protective gear. Those N-95 masks work really well."

After making it through the first year of COVID, Turner had a conversation with God. "I said, 'OK, what have you got in store for me next?' she says, laughing. "His answer? Don't ever smart off to God."



It was fall of 2021 when Turner felt a crushing pain on her chest. She went to Methodist Hospital, where blood work followed by other testing and a computerized tomography (CT) scan revealed a nodule on her left lung. She chose to go to Omaha for the tests "because I didn't want anyone I worked with to know."

Those initial tests were followed by a positron emission tomography (PET) scan at Jennie Edmundson, which confirmed a diagnosis of lung cancer.

Similar testing is offered as part of the hospital's Incidental Lung Nodule Program. Launched in 2020 as a joint effort of the Nebraska Methodist Hospital and the Estabrook Cancer Center along with Jennie Edmundson, the program is a one-stop approach to providing patients with a fast, convenient and comprehensive way to have their lung nodules diagnosed, monitored and treated.

“I helped care for countless patients, and then I became one.”

*Marlene Turner*

Sumit Mukherjee, M.D., serves as the medical director of critical care and the medical director of the Thoracic Clinic at Jennie Edmundson. "Screening can have a huge impact on lung cancer, but we have faced limitations to finding it in its early stages," Dr. Mukherjee says.

Turner underwent surgery Oct. 4, 2021, and had three-fourths of her left lung removed. She began chemotherapy October 27, the 48th wedding anniversary of her and her husband, Larry. She had 12 chemotherapy sessions, ending the day before New Year's Eve.

Later, when tests indicated some nonmalignant haziness in her remaining left lung, she endured intensive rounds of radiation with additional chemotherapy, under the care of Max Chiu, M.D., a radiation oncology specialist, and Irina E. Popa, M.D., a hematologist and medical oncologist, both affiliated with the Methodist Health System. "It was twice a day for three weeks," Turner says. "That sucked the life out of me. But Dr. Chiu said I would recover faster, and I did."

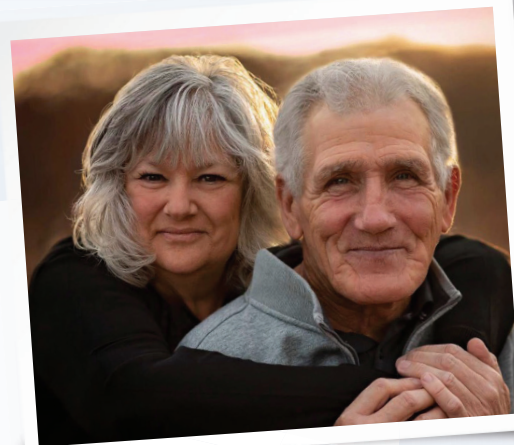
Throughout her treatments, Turner continued to work nights at Jennie Edmundson. "My girls were so good to me at work," she says. "I would sit in the parking lot and wonder how I was even going to walk in, my legs were like Jell-O. It took me so long to make rounds because I had to sit and rest in between."

Though her shifts were exhausting, she never gave up – except for when she quit smoking. "I was a smoker for 50 years," she says. "It cost me most of one lung. If I sound out of breath, it's because I am."

In addition to her co-workers, Turner, 71, credits the support of her husband, and their daughter, Jamie, and her family, with helping her through. "Larry never missed a treatment. He cooked, cleaned; he did everything," Turner says.

In recognition of her ordeal and Turner's quick wit, a niece provided something she keeps with her. "It's a cancer card, so when I want to get out of anything, like the speech at the Spirit of Courage dinner, I can play the cancer card," she says, smiling. "It's good for the rest of my life."

In remission and officially retired, Turner is grateful for the advanced care she received at the same hospital where she worked so long. "If not for Jennie Edmundson, I wouldn't have had my career," she says, "and I probably wouldn't be alive."





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## Cancer Center Takes Proactive Approach

## Programs Aim for Early Diagnosis, Improved Chances for Survival

– Article by Nick Schinker

The Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center and the Jennie Edmundson Foundation work together to make certain all cancer patients receive personalized care that treats their disease and supports their needs so they can concentrate on healing.

Most recently, the Cancer Center has begun offering Southwest Iowa leading-edge programs designed to raise awareness and provide early cancer diagnosis and care, with the goal of lessening the severity of cancer for those most at risk due to hereditary factors, family history, environmental and lifestyle factors, or a combination of components.

In the summer of 2022, the Cancer Center initiated a Hereditary Cancer Risk Program through the Jennie Edmundson Breast Health Center to help identify patients who are at an increased risk for breast cancer. That program has evolved to also include screenings for individuals for whom certain factors put them at risk for other forms of cancer, including melanoma and pancreatic, ovarian and prostate cancers. All Methodist Health System patients have access to the Hereditary Cancer Risk Program regardless of where they receive treatment.

Michael Zlomke, M.D., general surgeon and medical director of the Breast Health Center at Jennie Edmundson, says genetic testing is recommended for any patient with breast cancer to determine if other family members are candidates for screening and early monitoring.

"If someone out there knows that breast cancer killed their mother, they don't have to sit around and wonder or wait until they get it," Dr. Zlomke says. "We're not going to let that happen. We now offer screening and genetic testing so we can look for very early signs. If certain genetic mutations are detected, we can identify cancer at an early stage, and that can significantly impact treatment and hopefully improve survival."



Michael Zlomke, M.D., general surgeon and medical director of the Breast Health Center, and Tammy Johnson, nurse practitioner

Tammy Johnson has served as the registered nurse navigator at the Breast Health Center for more than 20 years and is now a nurse practitioner at the hospital's Hereditary Cancer Risk Clinic. She is a graduate of Briar Cliff University's Nurse Practitioner Program and is certified for genetic cancer risk assessment, and she also completed an intensive course in genetic risk assessment through the City of Hope. Contact her at the Hereditary Cancer Risk Program at 712-396-4117 with questions or to schedule an appointment.

In 2020, the Incidental Lung Nodule Program was launched as a joint effort of the Nebraska Methodist Hospital and its Estabrook Cancer Center, along with Jennie Edmundson, to provide patients with a fast, convenient and comprehensive way to have their lung nodules diagnosed, monitored and treated.

Nodules in the lung are sometimes found in conjunction with a separate medical incident, for example, when someone comes to the Emergency Department with a rib injury that requires a chest X-ray. The Incidental Lung Nodule Program is a coordinated approach that utilizes a software program to identify high-risk nodules and arrange follow-up examination and care.

With the program, a dedicated nurse navigator will review the data obtained from the patient's scan, utilize the software program to identify high-risk nodules and check past scans, if available, to see if the nodule was present at that time and if there is any change. The goal is to advance early detection of lung cancer and provide better care to the patient.

Dr. Zlomke says these screening programs can identify risk factors and lead to medical management decisions such as closer surveillance, increased clinical exams, MRIs, prophylactic procedures, adjustments to medications and other



steps to take. "By looking for red flags regarding cancer, especially those cancers associated with genetic mutations, we want to help our current population and successive generations," he says.

Since opening its doors in 1994, the Cancer Center has been providing the highest-quality treatments and therapies, delivered by certified and experienced medical experts utilizing state-of-the-art equipment. In 2021, the Cancer Center marked the 25th anniversary of its accreditation by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (ACS/COC). The center has been reaccredited every three years since.

The center also features radiation oncology; a Head and Neck Clinic; Colorectal Clinic; interventional radiology; full-service, on-site pathology; cancer research and trial studies; nutrition services and rehabilitation services.

The Breast Health Center at Jennie Edmundson, which marked its 20th anniversary in 2020, is southwest Iowa's first comprehensive care facility of its kind and is accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC).

At the heart of the care are the partnerships between the patient, their families and the dozens

of physicians, surgeons, therapists, nurses, medical caregivers and support staff at the Cancer Center.

Additionally, the longstanding partnership between the Cancer Center and Heartland Oncology & Hematology enables the delivery of medical oncology and chemotherapy treatments, often conveniently timed to coincide with a patient's trip to the Cancer Center for other services.

Each year, the Jennie Edmundson Foundation supports dozens of patients and their families through the Spirit of Courage Patient Care Fund. The fund provides assistance to patients who need help paying expenses associated with cancer, such as medications, treatments and deductibles, as well as everyday living expenses such as groceries, rent and gas to travel to and from care.

"Without this type of help, many of these vulnerable members of our community would simply forgo treatment, and possibly even their life-sustaining medications," says Tara Slevin, chief philanthropy officer at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital and president of the Jennie Edmundson Foundation. "Every donation, large and small, directly benefits the people of Southwest Iowa."

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## Familial Risks

*A family history of cancer and shared environmental or lifestyle factors*



## Hereditary Risks

*Inherited gene mutations that increase cancer risk*



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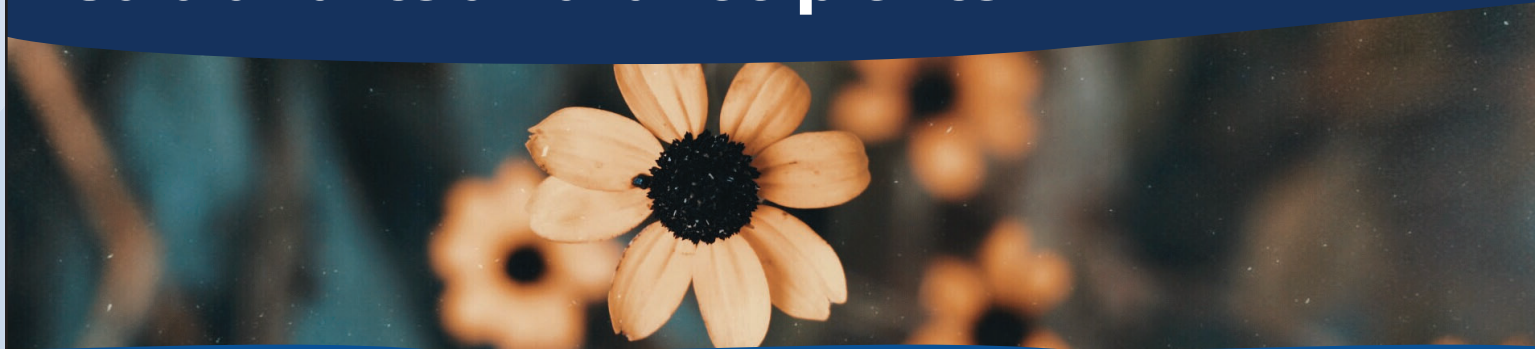
- Hover your camera over the QR code at left and tap the link that appears to begin the risk assessment survey
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Lori Mitchell  
Dr. Sumit and Chrissta Mukherjee  
Nebraska Cancer Specialists  
Northern Natural Gas  
Rita's Running Crew  
Rita's Work Family  
Fran Shorey – 2023 Recipient  
Fran and John Shorey  
Security National Bank  
Service Master Restore by Schmader

Slevin Family  
Synchronicity, Inc.  
Marlene Turner – 2023 Recipient  
Wheels of Courage Car Club  
WHITE CAP  
Tom and Janet Whitson

## Film/TV/Sports Celebrities

Alix Angelis  
Kris Angelis  
Grace Bannon  
Jason Bayle  
Chris Bober  
Alan Campbell  
Brett Cullen  
Rad Daly  
Brooke D'Orsay  
Chris Gann  
Erich Hover  
Larry Jacobson  
Keith Jones  
Jim Klock  
Marcie Klock  
Kirstin Kluver  
Sterling Knight  
Carl Marino  
Ilona Marino  
Tohoru Masamune  
Rico Paris  
Ricky Simmons  
Steve Taylor  
Sarah Yrkoski

## Local Celebrities

Bickham  
Big P  
Todd Brandt  
Brian Mastre  
Mike McKnight  
Todd Studer  
Mayor Matt Walsh  
Dave Webber



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# Executive Committee

**Jen Cody**, Table Sales Chair

**Nate Eckley**, Technical Support

**Carol Elder**, Wheels of Courage  
Co-Chair

**Carol Horner**, Golf Tournament Chair

**Sam Fragoso**, Operations Support

**JoAnn Jensen**, Auction Co-Chair

**Scott and Susan Hartman**, Spirit of  
Courage Recipient Gathering Host

**Scott Hoffman**, Hotel Chair

**Edd and Donna Leach**, Spirit of  
Courage Recipient Gathering Host

**Mike McKay**, Videographer

**Pat Miller**, Wheels of Courage  
Co-Chair

**Jeremy Noel**, Wheels of Courage  
Co-Chair

**Bill Oldenburg**, Celebrity Co-Chair

**Brad and Mindy Perdue**, Race  
Car Team

**Lynn Porter**, Auction Co-Chair

**Rachel Reis**, Volunteer Chair

**Nick Schinker**, Writer

**Cindy Schmader**, Auction Co-Chair

**Clodagh Slevin**, Celebrity Co-Chair

**Tara Slevin**, Event Coordinator

**Dave Webber**, Event MC

**Sandy Westphal**, Marketing

**Sharon White**, Auction Co-Chair

# Acknowledgments as of July 24, 2023



*Tara thanking the Doll Team  
for years of support!*



The "Carols"  
(Carol Elder and Carol Horner)  
take a well-deserved break after a  
long summer of fun and fundraising.

## Sponsors

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#### CONTRIBUTORS

Anderson Partners Advertising

Brad Perdue Racing

Dodge Riverside Golf Club

## Special Thank You

To the many volunteers who worked together to make this  
weekend possible!





The Wheels of Courage Team would like  
to congratulate this year's  
Spirit of Courage Recipients!

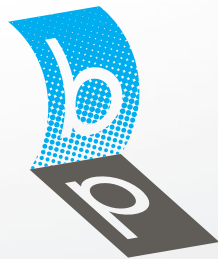


The Wheels of Courage Team has  
raised \$30,000 so far in 2023, benefiting cancer patients at  
Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital!

*Remembering Kim Elder, Wheels of Courage Committee Founding Member  
July 11, 1955 - May 19, 2023*

**Save the Date • Wheels of Courage Car Show**  
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