

Jennie Edmundson Foundation

Spirit of Courage

August 2-3,
2024

Mid - America Center
Council Bluffs, IA

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



Travis
Meier



Kathy
Runde



Terry
Thomas



Stacia
Thompson

2024 Spirit of Courage Recipients

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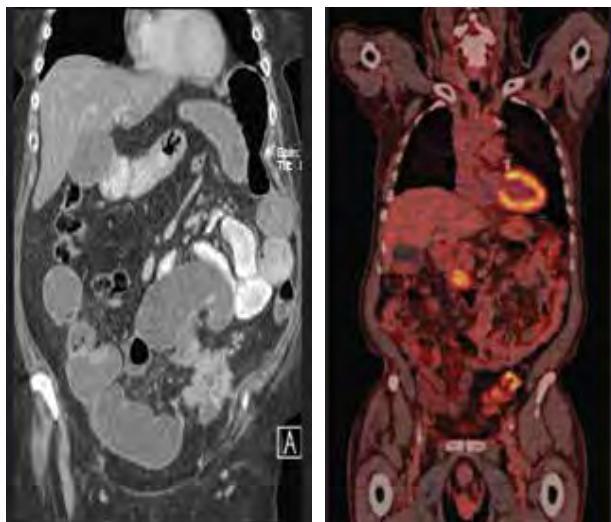
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Guy! **Harrah's**
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Spirit of Courage Past Recipients

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

2023

Rita Epperson
Brent Malskeit
Fran Shorey
Marlene Turner

2021

Donna Elliff
Deb Potter
Jake Powers
Kevin Rutland

2020-2022

All past Spirit of Courage recipients were honored during the event.

2019

Deb Bladt
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 22nd annual Spirit of Courage Gala weekend!

For more than two decades, we have come together as a community to support the Spirit of Courage Cancer Center Charitable Patient Care Fund. In that time, your generosity has helped the Jennie Edmundson Foundation raise more than \$2 million, with 100 percent of those donations providing assistance to uninsured and underinsured patients who need help covering expenses associated with diagnosis and treatment of cancer. It truly makes a difference in the lives of our patients and their families.

The theme each year is courage, and our four Spirit of Courage award recipients exemplify that quality. In this program, you will read about the brave cancer journeys of Terry Thomas, Kathy Runde, Travis Meier and Stacia "Granny Bullwinkle" Thompson. Each uniquely inspiring story illustrates the strength it takes to face cancer – and the immeasurable value of the support of their family and friends.

Another theme this year is "Provider Strong!"

In this program you will read about the services offered in the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center. The article details how the dedicated, experienced caregivers, the latest in techniques and technologies, and the addition of a second oncology/hematology service make Jennie Edmundson the primary destination for cancer treatment in southwest and western Iowa.

So many of our sponsors have been with us the entire 22 years, and we have an article recognizing the value of their unwavering support, with the spotlight this year on Diagnostic Radiology P.C., and its skilled team of medical professionals.

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

The Foundation thanks all our sponsors and donors for their continuing generosity. We thank the executive board, committee chairs and volunteers for contributing their time and talents. And – on behalf of all the patients who benefit directly from your generosity – we thank you!

Sincerely,



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



Tara Slevin

You are an inspiration to us all, Spirit of Courage recipients.

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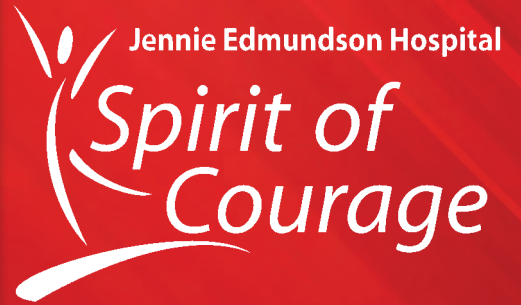
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2024 Spirit of Courage Events

THURSDAY, JUNE 20TH

Recipient Welcome Party - Hosted by Edd & Donna Leach

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

Wheels of Courage Car Show - Held at Quaker Steak & Lube

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2

Recipient and Celebrity Event - Hosted by Scott & Susan Hartman

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

22ND ANNUAL SPIRIT OF COURAGE

A benefit Spirit of Courage Cancer Center Charitable Patient Care Fund which provides assistance to patients with expenses associated with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

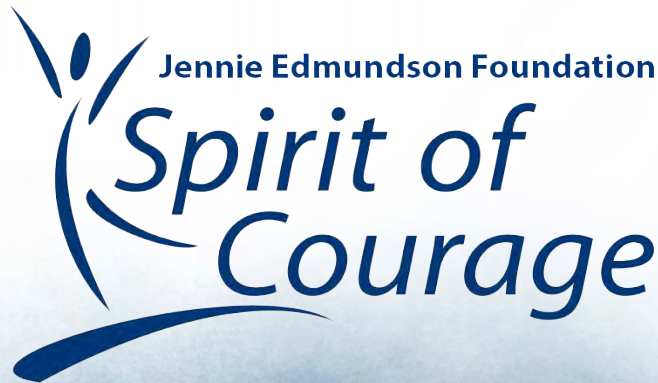
SHOTGUN SCRAMBLE CELEBRITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Dodge Riverside Golf Club

GALA DINNER, AUCTION & PRESENTATION

Spirit of Courage Awards will be presented to four new recipients:

Travis Meier, Kathy Runde, Terry Thomas & Stacia Thompson



Congratulations 2024 Recipients:

Travis Meier • Kathy Runde • Terry Thomas • Stacia Thompson

As we embark on our 22nd 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 part of your journey and blessed to work alongside you and your families in the fight against cancer.



(Left) Diagnostic Radiology, P.C. co-founder, Jim Smith, M.D., and (Right) Annabel Galva, M.D., are hard at work putting patients first.

Patients Rely Upon the Support of the Foundation's Donors and Sponsors Like Diagnostic Radiology, P.C.

Article by Nick Schinker

The donors and sponsors who generously support the Jennie Edmundson Foundation give more than money – they give cancer patients peace of mind knowing there is help available for the uninsured costs that accompany cancer treatment.

Tara Slevin, Chief Philanthropy Officer at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital and President, Jennie Edmundson Foundation, says that in the 22 years since the inception of the Spirit of Courage events, more than \$2 million has been raised for the Spirit of Courage Patient Care Fund. Every dollar donated to the fund provides assistance to cancer patients and their families for a wide range of necessities, from deductibles and uninsured medications to everyday living expenses such as groceries, rent and gas.

"The Jennie Edmundson Foundation is able to fulfill a growing number of needs for patients and families because of the continued support of our sponsors and donors," Slevin says. "We

know we can count on them. 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"

From the annual Spirit of Courage weekend, to Wheels of Courage and Pink Out every October, Slevin says, "the number of people and businesses that willingly give their time and work so very hard to make these events a success is heartwarming."

One of those sponsors is Diagnostic Radiology, P.C., a supporter of the Jennie Edmundson Foundation and its fundraising efforts for 20 years.

Jim Smith, M.D., cofounded the business with Robert Forbes, M.D., as an imaging center in 2004. It has since grown to eight radiologists, offering imaging and interpretation services, including minimally invasive procedures, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and positron emission tomography (PET)



Dr. Hasiek and Dr. Smith enjoy time on the links at Spirit of Courage golf events – they are proud supporters of the Jennie Edmundson Foundation.

interpretation, at regional hospitals in western Iowa and northwest Missouri.

“Delivering these services throughout the area keeps patients closer to their homes for care,” Dr. Smith says. “We also have work stations in our homes so we can analyze and interpret the images in a timely manner.”

He says the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center offers care coordinated through a weekly multidisciplinary tumor conference, where every patient’s case is reviewed by as many as 15 experts seated together.

“Often patients have complicated health issues requiring a consensus to address how to best manage their care,” Dr. Smith says. “Being a part of a team that helps patients receive the personalized care they need to get well is very rewarding for us.”

He says the Jennie Edmundson Foundation plays a key role in patient care. “There are so many expenses associated with health care that very often aren’t covered by insurance,” he says. “Just the cost of gas to travel for treatment every week can be overwhelming.”

“That’s where the Foundation steps in and helps patients and their families so they can concentrate on healing,” Dr. Smith says. “We are happy to serve as a sponsor of the Foundation’s

worthwhile efforts.”

Slevin recalls how one patient traveled from her home in Macedonia, Iowa, to the Cancer Center for chemotherapy and radiation treatment, making the approximately 60-mile round trip at least 50 times. That’s 3,000 miles – slightly farther than the drive from Los Angeles to Boston! “Giving her gas cards to help offset that expense made a huge difference,” Slevin says.

By bridging some of the gaps that occur when families face the unexpected costs of a cancer diagnosis, and by eliminating potential obstacles to receiving care, the Charitable Cancer Patient Fund allows patients to concentrate on doing all they can to overcome the disease.

“Without the support of our sponsors and donors,” Slevin says, “many patients would face the choice of putting gas in the tank or food on the table. The Foundation strives to make certain they can do both.”

“Being a part of a team that helps patients receive the personalized care they need to get well is very rewarding for us.”

James Smith, MD

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The Brad Perdue Racing Team proudly supports the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center and the 2024 Spirit of Courage Recipients!





Special Thanks

I would like to thank my family and friend for the support and taking the time to help me get to appointments and when things are rough.

I would like to thank the staff, nurses and doctors for everything they do, but I would like to thank the nurses big time for going above and beyond.

From checking on me throughout the week and finding ways to help make treatment better and easier. Megan, Amanda, both Mary's (young and old), and everyone at Heartland Oncology that takes the time to talk with me and asks how I'm doing.

They been there since day one and I don't know where I'd be. They have become like a second family I get to see every week. They are an amazing staff and facility to get treatment at. I would not change anything.

I'd also like to thank everyone that made this possible.

Travis Meier

The War Continues

Article by Nick Schinker

There is nothing phony about Travis Meier. He speaks his mind, and when he's quiet, his smile says it all. He's no stranger to hard work, having helped out on his family's farm since he was little. He lives in Carroll, Iowa, and his parents, grandparents and three brothers are all nearby. After high school, he served more than a decade in the Iowa National Guard, including a nine-month tour in Iraq and Kuwait operating heavy machinery. He has a good job doing maintenance for Pella windows, but he's most comfortable when he's outdoors. He loves to hunt and fish, and has a few favorite ponds and gravel pits he might just point out if you press him a bit. Though T-shirts are his wardrobe of choice, he has a plaid shirt or two if he really needs to dress up.

At 34 years old, Meier has a life many of us might envy – if not for the cancer.

Meier joined the National Guard in January 2010. "My older brother served, and I had thought about it in high school," he says. "I went to college for a year, and I knew it would help with my student loan."

In 2016, his service took him from one weekend a month to an extended tour in Iraq and Kuwait. "It really wasn't bad," he recalls. "I worked an eight-hour day driving a dozer-excavator, and I never saw combat. We took out dirt walls and put in HESCOs, which are like a wall but actually a stronger, more defensive barrier."

A couple years later, Meier was on the job assembling Pella windows when he began experiencing back pain. Several weeks of physical therapy yielded no improvement. His family physician recommended a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan.

The results hit him harder than a bulldozer.

"There was a grape-sized mass in my left shoulder," he says. "And there was one around a rib pressing against my lung. There was also a goose-egg sized mass in my lower back pressing against my sciatic nerve."

The technical name was multiple myeloma. Put simply, cancer.

"My doctor called me in after hours, and he had

tears in his eyes," Meier recalls. "I knew it was something major. Then, I had to break the news to mom and dad."

After the MRI, Meier had a computerized tomography (CT) scan with contrasting dye. "It pretty much lit up everywhere," he says.

He began chemotherapy in November 2018 with Heartland Oncology & Hematology, a longtime partner of the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center; and continued it until March 2019. That was followed by a stem cell transplant at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, including 21 days in the hospital monitoring his cell counts, and 100 days rest to allow his body to recover.

"The stem cell transplant did not work," he says. "Then, about July 2019, I started chemo again."

Six years after his diagnosis, the treatments continue. Doctors have tried chemotherapy in both pill and injected forms. "They keep me on something until it starts to stop working," Meier says. "One month, my cancer levels are up; one month, they're down."

And yet, anyone who meets Meier would be hard-pressed to know something is wrong. "Physically, no one knows," he says. "I look perfectly healthy. My weight was down for a while, but I've been able to maintain it ever since."

He says there is an advantage to being diagnosed with multiple myeloma at age 28 like he was. "They told me that this is an older person's cancer, most common if you're 55 to 60," he says. "I believe that gives me an edge."

He could have his treatments in Carroll but chooses to make the hour-and-forty-minute drive to Jennie Edmundson and Heartland Oncology & Hematology.

"All the doctors and nurses at Heartland go above and beyond," Meier says. "I'll come here as long as I can afford to."



“ My doctor called me back in after hours, and he had tears in his eyes,” Meier recalls. “I knew it was something major. Then, I had to break the news to mom and dad. ”

Travis Meier

“I have my family and friends to support me, and I have the love of living.”

Travis Meier

The trips have been helped by gas and grocery cards from the Jennie Edmundson Foundation, funded by the Spirit of Courage weekend gala. “Those have made a huge difference,” he says.

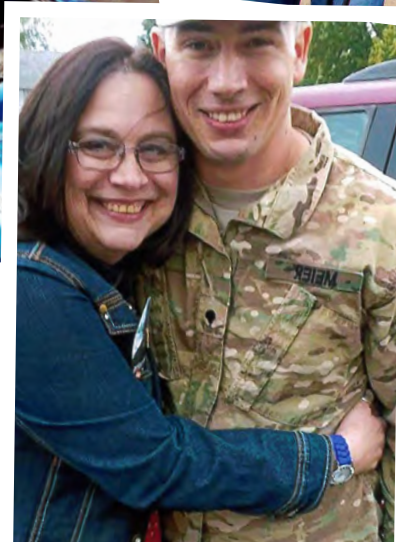
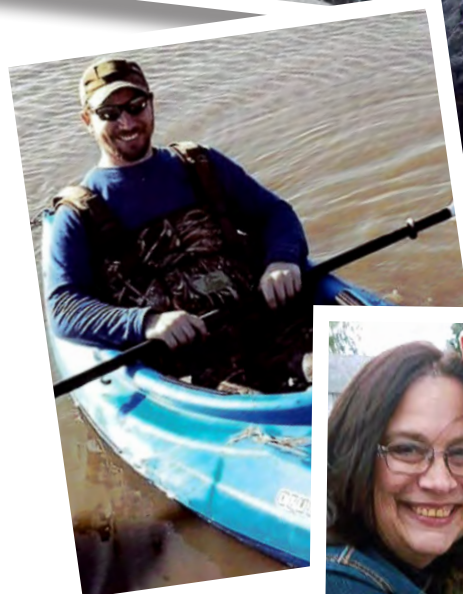
The chemotherapy does come with side effects, including nausea that often prevents Meier from driving back to Carroll immediately afterward. “I find it helps to go walk it off,” he says. “So I’ll go to the mall, or to Bass Pro Shops. I’m pretty much a regular there every Friday.”

The past six years, and the ups and downs of his treatments, have been hard on his family, Meier says. “It’s been tough on mom and dad. No parent wants to see their child go through this. It can get emotional, so I don’t bring it up a lot.”

Cancer is a fight Meier says he wasn’t trained for; much more frightening than anything he faced in uniform. “It’s a crappy situation but you can’t let it take you down,” he says. “It stinks scheduling everything around treatments, but you can still have a decent life with it.”

Life, he says, is the keyword.

“I have my family and friends to support me, and I have the love of living,” he says. “I think I’m alive and fighting because of the fact there are so many things I still want to do.”





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Kathy Runde

Special Thanks

My care team: Drs. Cisler, Dittrick, Ippolito, Lacy, Mukherjee, Natarjan, Ngu Yen, and Zlomke, and nurses Tammy Johnson, RN, Connie Casson, RN, and Jennifer Jorgensen, RN, rehab therapists.

Tara Slevin, Spirit of Courage, so many friends, thank you for the cards, texts, phone calls, meals and especially their support.

My brother, Ward and his wife Kelly, sisters, Jane and Janee, my husband Terry, my best friend, always by my side, my daughter Joy and son-in-law Shane, coming out-of-state to help take care of me and navigating appointments I needed for cancer diagnosis.

Thank you to Jesus, being by my side and putting all these people in my life to help me.

Care for the Caregiver

Article by Nick Schinker

Long before the first of three cancer diagnoses, Kathy Runde felt Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital was the right place for her.

"I remember walking into Jennie Edmundson Hospital at seven years old with my aunt, Janetta, who was a registered nurse there," Runde recalls. "It felt good inside. I said to myself, someday when I grow up, I'm going to work here."

Born in Dunlap, Iowa, Runde, 74, has lived in Council Bluffs since she was one year old. In 1973, she earned her nursing degree at Jennie Edmundson, and after a year working in Wichita, Kansas, she came back to Jennie – and served as a nurse for four decades, until her retirement in 2015.

"I worked mostly med/surg (medical-surgical), where you do everything from bronchitis to cancer, with my last five years in outpatient surgery," she says proudly. "I loved being a nurse. It was so rewarding. It truly was my

passion, and I got to do what I love to do – take care of people."

One year prior to her retirement, a cancerous polyp was discovered by Jason Cisler, M.D., during a routine colonoscopy. Runde underwent a colectomy by surgeon George W. Dittrick, M.D., which removed the polyp and part of her colon. "They were able to remove all the cancer," she recalls. "It was a frightening experience, and then it kept getting worse." In 2017, during a routine mammogram a lump was detected in Runde's right breast. Michael Zlomke, M.D., general surgeon and former medical director of the Breast Health Center at Jennie Edmundson, performed a partial mastectomy, and Runde also underwent radiation treatment. The surgery was successful, and "all mammograms since have been clear," she says.

In May 2023, Runde received word from a hospital in Omaha that her brother, Scott Prine, had been diagnosed with bladder cancer. "My younger sister and brother were both working full-time, and Scott being single, I became his caregiver,"

Runde says. "Being a nurse and his big sister, it just seemed natural."

In the months that followed, Scott underwent several surgeries and rehabilitation, but lost his battle with cancer on August 15, 2023.

"During this time," Runde recalls, "I began having changes in my vision, a hard time focusing, and a couple of falls," although she told no one about the falls. "Just prior to Scott's death, I was in a car accident, likely caused by the changes in my vision. By his funeral, my symptoms had worsened to the point that I couldn't formulate my thoughts or write, and my balance was much worse. I felt like I was only going through the motions; numb."

She says her family had been noticing the changes. "I look back now and realize that the tragedy of my brother's death was actually a blessing to me, because my family was around and could see something wasn't right with me," she says. "It was a blessing that I got some help, or my symptoms may have gone overlooked."

Runde visited her primary care physician, John Ippolito, M.D., who ordered a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan. "The MRI revealed a brain tumor and swelling around my brain," she recalls.

She was admitted to Jennie Edmundson and her MRI was reviewed by Jordan P. Lacy, M.D., a neurosurgeon. "He quietly but confidently told me, 'I think I can get that tumor out,'" she recalls. One week later, she underwent a craniotomy and the tumor was "completely removed."

However, the news that followed was not good. "The tumor tissue was tested and malignant lung cells were found," she says. "That meant I had Stage IV lung cancer that had metastasized to my brain."

Runde was referred to Nagendra Natarajan, M.D., an oncologist with Nebraska Methodist Health System and Nebraska Cancer Specialists, and she began immunotherapy and chemotherapy. She has since transitioned to a new oncologist, Joel M. Michalski, M.D., also with Nebraska Cancer Specialists, and continues her chemotherapy treatments at the Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center, hoping to keep the lung tumor from growing.



“Just when you think you’re going to break the cycle, this happens. Still, I’m going to keep fighting it.”

Kathy Runde





“It’s an honor I wish I never had.”

Kathy Runde

“My mother and grandmother died of lung cancer,” she says. “Just when you think you’re going to break the cycle, this happens. Still, I’m going to keep fighting it.”

Throughout each cancer journey, Runde credits her family, especially her husband, Terry, and daughter, Joy; brother, Ward Prine, and sister, Jane Prine, with being her primary pillars of support. And, she says, there are so many others. “The doctors, the nurses, all my friends who called and cared,” she says.

When told she had been selected to receive the Spirit of Courage award, Runde says she initially was reluctant to accept. “I thought about it and I didn’t want people, especially my fellow nurses, to look at me differently – as if I felt I’d done something special to deserve an award,” she says. “It took me a little time to come to terms with it, but I have.

“It’s an honor I wish I never had.”





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Medical Solutions is proud to support our neighbors who continue to raise the bar in healthcare and transform the lives of those who live in our community.

We're honored to celebrate the **22nd annual Spirit of Courage** and recognize its continued commitment to care, education, and innovation.

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Capturing Memories & Moments



Past and present Spirit of Courage recipients, celebrity guests and host couple Scott and Susan Hartman squeeze together for an epic photo op. What an incredible group!



A fun night out with coworkers raising funds for a great cause!



Former recipient Edd Leach and his wife, Donna, hosted the 2024 Spirit of Courage Kick-Off Party in June.



Deb and Jerry Potter, along with their granddaughters were among the lucky winners at last year's silent auction!



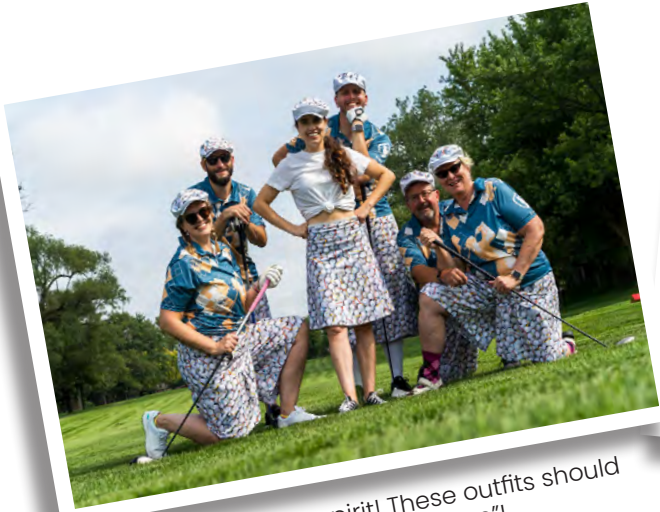
Kristin Markel, Monica Wilcox, Morgan Keysor and Christina Solt are all smikes at the 2023 gala.



Former recipient Bobbi Calderon and friends hanging out poolside with celebrities.



2023 recipients pause for a touching photo.



It's all about team spirit! These outfits should count as a "hole in one"!



Past and present SOC recipients gather at the home of Edd and Donna Leach in June.



Brett Cullen stops for a quick pic with Monica Wilcox, Jenni Haan, and Theresa MacDissi



The crew from Wheels of Courage showing their support at Spirit of Courage 2023!

Terry Thomas - Recipient



Terry Thomas

Special Thanks

Two of my friends who are no longer with us, Rita Epperson and Ryan Schnackenberg, you both are missed.

My soulmate and best friend, my wife Ann.

My three daughters Shelly, Tami, and Janell as well as my son, Nic, and my friend, Pat. Thank you also to my brothers, sister and extended family.

My grandchildren and my great-grandson have brought me so much joy. Also, two of my grandsons' partners, McKenzie and Alexa, who have brought me numerous high-calorie foods and desserts!

Dr. Goswami for his quick diagnosis and immediately getting me into Dr. Hussein.

Dr. Hussein for his positive attitude and the compassionate care he provides to all of his patients.

The entire Heartland Oncology Staff. They make this journey right along with you. Encouragement, compassion, inspiration, and great care is an everyday task that they perform. They all have a special place in my heart.

Every single person I've encountered at Jennie Edmundson Hospital has acknowledged my presence and made me feel welcome and comfortable. The administration should be commended.

It's been a great honor to be nominated for the Spirit of Courage award by the JEH Foundation. Tara, JoAnn, and the staff do so much to make the Spirit of Courage successful. The JEH Foundation does so much for our community and can help so many, not to mention, I appreciate all of the sponsors and their contributions to this great organization.

Inspiring Others Not to Give Up

Article by Nick Schinker

Terry Thomas, 75, and his wife, Ann, had lived in Chandler, Ariz., for nearly a decade, enjoying his retirement from the auto dealership business in Glenwood, Iowa, "and playing a lot of golf together." But in 2022, he wasn't feeling well, so he went through a battery of tests at an Arizona cancer facility. The tests weren't decisive as to the cause of his ailment, but Thomas was happy with what they didn't find. "They told me, 'One thing is sure – you don't have cancer,'" he says. "They gave me basically a clean bill of health."

As the parents of four grown children, grandparents to nine and great-grandparents to one, Thomas and his wife wanted to move back to Council Bluffs and be closer to their families. They left Arizona in February 2023, but their joyful family reunion didn't last long. "A week after we got here, I began having enormous stomach pain," Thomas recalls. "I went

to Methodist Jennie Edmundson and was admitted for tests. That's when they found it."

A computed tomography (CT) scan and biopsy revealed esophageal and esophagogastric junction cancer. It had advanced to Stage IV.

Thomas had never shied away from any challenge in his life. At age 17, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy under a program called the "Kiddie Cruise," which allowed seventeen-year-olds to enlist and serve three-years, which he spent aboard a submarine.

Although the diagnosis was a shock, he vowed to give it his best fight. He didn't realize at the time how tough an opponent the cancer – and the treatment – would be.

Thomas began chemotherapy with the drug Fluorouracil, also known as 5-FU. Fluorouracil is among a group of chemotherapy drugs known as antimetabolites. The goal is for the antimetabolites to slow the growth of the cancer cells and stop them from reproducing.

For Thomas, the hope that 5-FU provided was accompanied by painfully severe side effects.

“It was devastating,” he says. “It turns out there is a gene in my body that would not allow the 5-FU to dissipate. I broke out in awful skin sores. I looked like a leper.

“The first nine months were really, really tough,” Thomas says. “I’d have a treatment and be so sick for 11 or 12 days. Then, I’d go back on the 15th day and do it all again. It got so bad, I was just going to give up. I felt like I had come home to die.”

Thomas says Sakeer Hussain, M.D., Medical Oncologist/Hematologist at Heartland Oncology & Hematology, a longtime partner of the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center, conducted tests and tried to find alternatives to ease Thomas’s side effects. “They tried several drugs, and kept eliminating them one by one,” he says.

“Dr. Hussain is awesome,” Thomas says. “You can tell he really cares about his patients. I could see he was upset when things were really difficult for me. And there are days when you feel better or have a good scan, and you can tell it kind of makes his day.”

He says the oncology nurses also did their best to support him physically and mentally. They built strong relationships, and Thomas even came up with humorous nicknames for those he got to know best. “They have so much heart and empathy,” he says. “They become your inspiration.”

He found another inspiration in a fellow chemotherapy patient – Rita Epperson. Epperson had worked at Jennie Edmundson for 40 years when she was diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer that had metastasized to her liver. A Spirit of Courage recipient in 2023, Epperson began chemotherapy in 2022,



“They have so much heart and empathy,” he says. “They become your inspiration.”

Terry Thomas

becoming a friend and cheerleader to her fellow patients, and beloved by the Jennie Edmundson staff who had known her so long. Sadly, she lost her battle September 14, 2023.

“Rita was my chemo partner,” Thomas says. “We would sit and talk for hours. She was a lovely person. I’ve never met a kinder, more gentle woman. It was because of my family, and Rita and the oncology nurses that I decided to keep on going.”

After discovering the issue with the 5-FU drug remaining in Thomas’s body rather than dissipating, he was switched to immunotherapy, which he continues to undergo every two weeks.

His family has been beside him through every challenge. “I think cancer is toughest on your family and your spouse,” he says. “You have to endure the physical effects, but your wife and family have a lot of mental anguish to deal with. I know they felt helpless, but they stayed strong for me. They’ve been a huge support.”

Thomas says he is humbled to have been selected as a Spirit of Courage award recipient.



"I think there are a lot more deserving people out there," he says. "I had chemo with people who are on their second and third bouts with cancer. They are amazing people, and so are those nurses. Each one of them deserves an award. Without them, patients wouldn't have near the hope that they do. They give you the will and the courage to fight."

Thomas says he lives every day as best he can, for his family and for others. "I've been around the world several times," he says. "I've been blessed, and if I can inspire one other person not to give up, then that's my job and I'm going to keep doing it."



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Methodist Radiation Oncology Team

From left:

- Alireza Mirmiran, MD
- Tien-Shew W. "Bill" Huang, MD
- Max S. Chiu, MD
- Cam Nguyen, MD
- Ming-yang Hung, MD
- Yoseful Haque, MD



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Stacia Thompson

Special Thanks

My family, of course, has been a great support. I'm not sure I could have remained positive without BC, who picked up the slack when I was too tired to get things done. The kids, grandkids and great grandkids were a constant motivation to keep going. The freezer full of meals they provided was so helpful and greatly appreciated.

My friends, who went above and beyond with rides, food, prayers and support have a very special place in my heart.

My Granny Bullwinkle followers listened to my story, asked questions and offered support throughout this journey. It was so helpful for me to be able to tell my story. You all kept me on track.

Those who have gone on this journey before me and shared their positive outlook were such powerful role models and taught me how to handle things in a positive way.

Special thanks to the doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals I have encountered along the way. They have all been fantastic. The support from the foundation was a real boost- it was so nice to have lunch provided during long chemo sessions!

Granny Bullwinkle vs. Boris the Lump

Article by Nick Schinker

When a very dear friend enduring her third fight against lung cancer told Stacia Thompson more than 10 years ago that "she had been blessed to have cancer," Thompson struggled to know what she meant.

Now she understands.

Diagnosed with breast cancer in late May 2023, Thompson gradually came to realize what her friend was saying. Though Thompson had felt blessed many times throughout her sixty-nine years, this was different. The cancer was discovered during a routine mammogram – and it was caught early, Stage I. She was healthy, doing four miles a day on her treadmill, and active on the farm she shared with her husband, B.C., a home passed down

from his grandparents. The couple raised four children (both B.C. and Stacia had two children prior to their marriage) and have eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren – including two sets of twins. Her life has been a treasure trove of family and friends.

Then, as her family rallied around her, as the love poured forth from friends old and new, and from the doctors, oncology nurses and other caregivers she never thought she'd meet, the wisdom of her friend's message was clear. "Only when something like this happens in your life do you get to see all the good that people have in them and are willing to share," she says. "With all that is going on in this world today, it is a blessing to see how wonderful so many people are."

Growing up, Thompson watched her father and witnessed how he helped people as a family practice physician. She had the thought of becoming a doctor, too, but instead earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Wyoming. "After my father died, I went back to school for nursing," she recalls. "I've never regretted it."

She met her husband B.C. when both worked at a school in Maryville, Missouri. "He was in the superintendent's office, and I was the school nurse," she says. "We both started the same day, but I don't remember him from the welcome breakfast."

After B.C.'s parents died, the couple bought the family farmhouse near Oakland, Iowa. Thompson worked as a nursing instructor at Iowa Western in Clarinda for 15 years. During that time, a bond formed with Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital, where she would take her students for clinical training. "Now, many of them work there," she says, proudly. "Jennie feels very comfortable to me."

Thompson had a routine mammogram on May 29, 2023, not suspecting the results would be any different than in previous exams. "But, by the time I got home, I had a message from my primary care physician saying I had an appointment for an ultrasound," she says. "I have enough knowledge to know that when they go ahead and schedule the appointment for you without asking, it isn't good."

When shown the ultrasound images, "I could see the lump. I couldn't believe I hadn't felt it."

She and B.C. hugged and vowed to fight the cancer together. Later, when they began sharing the bad news with family, Thompson faced a question from one of her 8-year-old twin great-



granddaughters that she hadn't expected: "Is Granny going to die?"

At that moment, Thompson knew what simple reassurance wouldn't be enough. So she started thinking, and her thoughts took her to another friend, one with terminal cancer who had spoken of the importance of building a community around you, and inspiring them through your cancer journey.

That's when Thompson's teaching background and her imagination kicked in. Not only would she build a community, she would inspire and teach others about her cancer journey. But she wanted to find a way that the youngest ones in her family would embrace, while also understanding some of the complex treatments that lie ahead.

That's when Granny Bullwinkle, based on the old Bullwinkle J. Moose cartoons,

“With all that is going on in this world today, it is a blessing to see how wonderful so many people are.”

Stacia Thompson

was born. Her husband, B.C., would be Papa Rocky, for Bullwinkle's partner, Rocket "Rocky" Squirrel. And the cancer? Why, Boris the Lump, naturally, after Bullwinkle and Rocky's adversary, Boris Badenov.

Thompson wove the characters into a Facebook page and launched it June 28, 2023.

"Welcome to my story. It's one no one wishes to write. I hope to chronicle my cancer journey in a way my grandchildren can understand," she wrote. "Bullwinkle was not a perfect hero. He bumbled a lot, but was saved by his friends. With their help, he always wins in the end. That is why I chose him."

Thompson began months of chemotherapy, sharing the highs and lows through Granny Bullwinkle, building a community of understanding with each post. A freestyle weaver who has traveled to Ireland and to Canyon de Chelly in Arizona to learn from the Navaho weavers, Thompson passed the long hours in chemo crocheting gifts for others.

She finally underwent lumpectomy surgery Dec. 15. "Boris," she wrote, "has been evicted."

She finished chemotherapy June 21 this year, ringing the bell and sharing cookies depicting Bullwinkle and Boris that she had a bakery create for her surgeon, Patrick J. Ahrens, M.D., and the oncology team at Jennie Edmundson & Heartland Oncology and Hematology, for whom she has very high praise and gratitude.

That was followed by a "funeral" party for Boris the Lump on July 13.

Her journey is not over. Side effects from the chemotherapy and other drugs continue – including dry mouth that recently led to breaking off parts of four teeth while simply eating oatmeal.

Still, Thompson says, "I haven't had it so bad. I'm humbled and very honored to be selected for the Spirit of Courage award, but I don't see what I've done as special. I accepted as a way to show others that it's not always a horrible journey. It has its lows at times, but it's doable."

She might even call it a blessing in disguise.



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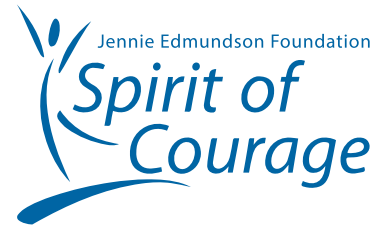
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Front, Left to Right: Patrick Ahrens, M.D., Jered Windorski, M.D., Anabel Galva, M.D.
Back: Left to Right: Pnchair Jonglertham, Becki Goldberg-Kahn, M.D., Lori Platt, M.D., Cam Nguyen, M.D., Theresa Evans, APRN-NP

Cancer Center Care is Provider Strong!

- Article by Nick Schinker

A growing roster of cancer specialists and the skills they bring – coupled with a staff of dedicated, experienced caregivers, the latest in techniques and technologies, and the addition of a second oncology/hematology service – make the Methodist Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center a primary destination for cancer treatment in western Iowa.

“Being ‘Provider Strong!’ means patients receive comprehensive care from a medical team committed to delivering the best possible course of treatment tailored to each patient’s needs,” says Chandy Lockman-Hoke, MS, RD, service leader for cancer services at Methodist Jennie Edmundson.

“With each new specialist and service provider we add, along with our affiliation with the Methodist Health System and the resources it offers, we can meet our cancer patients’ needs in a timely fashion, no matter how complex their situation,” Hoke says. “From early detection to surgery and treatment, we are capable of

delivering it all, and doing it close to home for everyone in southwest Iowa.”

Hoke has 18 years of experience in outpatient oncology. The knowledge she brings to her new role at the Jennie Edmundson Cancer Center provides additional depth to the leadership team as it adds capacity and services to a program consistently recognized for excellence.

Since opening its doors in 1994, the Cancer Center has been providing the highest quality treatments and therapies, delivered by board certified 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 is reaccredited every three years.

The center also features radiation oncology, a Head and Neck Clinic, Colorectal Clinic, a Lung and Thoracic Clinic, interventional radiology, full-

Right: Physicians Jered Windorski and Sumit Mukherjee review notes prior to a cancer conference meeting.



Left: Heartland Oncology & Hematology, physicians Sakeer Hussain and Pornchair Jonglertham meet to compare notes and patient care plans.

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).

The Cancer Center hosts a weekly multidisciplinary tumor conference where every patient's case is reviewed by as many as 15 experts seated together. Medical specialists in Harlan, Iowa, also join the conference electronically. The conference stimulates discussion and collaboration, resulting in the best care possible for each case.

"Cancer really should be considered an emergency," says Sumit Mukherjee, M.D., a pulmonologist who serves as the Medical Director of Critical Care and the Medical Director of the Lung and Thoracic Clinic at Jennie Edmundson. "The time from diagnosis to treatment is critical to a successful outcome."

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.

Most recently, the longstanding partnership between the Cancer Center and Heartland Oncology & Hematology has been joined by oncology services provider Nebraska Cancer Specialists. "Not only does this new partnership enhance the services we offer, it also makes it easier for our patients to access those services in a timely fashion," says the Cancer Center's Service Executive for Radiation Oncology, Michelle Kaufman, MS, R.T. (R,T).

The Cancer Center also offers free screenings and programs designed for early detection, such as the Hereditary Cancer Risk Program. Initiated in 2022, the program helps identify patients who are at an increased risk for 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.

Contact 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 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.

“The greatest factor defining Jennie Edmundson is our growth,” Dr. Mukherjee says. “Our surgical line growth, radiation oncology services, and our number of early stage treatments specifically for lung cancer have grown exponentially. Early detection and treatment is a huge advantage for our patients.”

He says the center’s effort to expand community screenings throughout Southwest Iowa is having a positive impact. “I’ve seen the data to support that we are truly making a difference,” he says.

Jered Windorski, M.D., is a general surgeon whose interests include breast disease and related issues. Skilled in open surgery as well as minimally invasive laparoscopy and robotic-assisted surgery, he joined the Methodist Jennie Edmundson team in June 2022.

In addition to his surgical and diagnostic skills, Dr. Windorski brings a unique perspective to his practice, having undergone a series of surgeries as a child. He says the experience makes him uniquely aware of the anxiety and apprehension patients and their families may encounter.

“When a patient hears the word ‘cancer,’ they might only hear a fraction of what follows,” he says. “Because my primary focus is the patient, I involve the family in the decision-making process. They can help interpret and reassure the patient even when I’m not there.”

Dr. Windorski says the Cancer Center and the Breast Health Center is distinguished by “an impressive staff that will coordinate all aspects of a patient’s care. Working out the logistics of a patient’s appointments and treatments to minimize travel helps reduce anxiety – and less worry means better healing.”

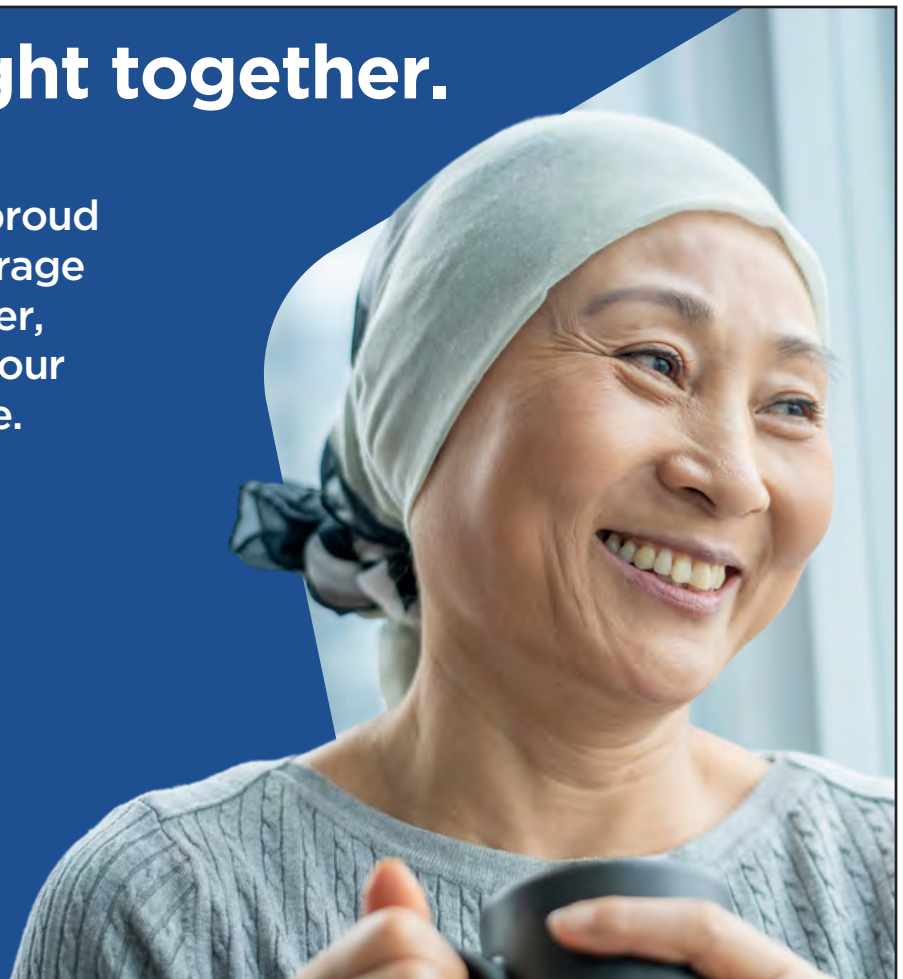
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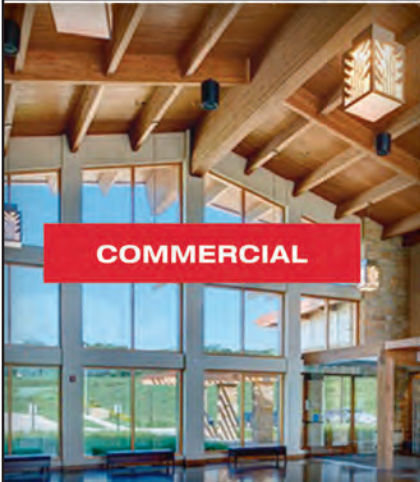
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