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Patient support improves outcomes: A Q&A with Chuck Westbrook and Joanne Pulles

With the right support, patients with cancer can feel empowered, and encouraged.

6 min read

By The American Cancer Society 06/23/23

Leadership



Hawaiian woman in 50s embracing her mid-20s daughter on couch who is fighting cancer

This post is sponsored by the American Cancer Society

Research shows that having access to support programs and resources improves the quality of life and survival outcomes for people with cancer – a fact that the American Cancer Society (ACS) weaves into its services and partnerships.



Chuck Westbrook is the Senior Vice President, Patient and Caregiver Services, at the American Cancer Society. Recently we spoke with him about the ways the leading cancer-fighting organization supports cancer patients, caregivers, and survivors.

Question: The American Cancer Society provides support that touches more than 55 million lives each year. Please share some of the ways the American Cancer Society supports patients, caregivers, and survivors.

Answer: The goal of our Patient Support Pillar is to provide needed support programs and services to all people with cancer and their families throughout their cancer journey.

Our 24/7 cancer helpline connects people experiencing cancer with trained cancer information specialists who answer questions, provide guidance, and offer a compassionate ear.

In some communities, our Road To Recovery® volunteers provide rides to patients who have no way to get to their cancer treatment. We also provide grants to local healthcare system partners so they can provide transportation assistance to their patients.

Breast cancer patients who want someone who can mentor them through their cancer experience benefit greatly from our online program, Reach To Recovery®. This connects people with cancer with an individual who is similar to them and who understands what it's like to have cancer.

The American Cancer Society supports survivorship through programs such as the Cancer Survivors Network (CSN); a peer support community for cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, families, and friends.

Q: Can you expand on the ways the American Cancer Society removes barriers to quality care to ensure everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer?

A: We help remove the financial barriers to treatment away from home through our Hope Lodge® program, which extends lodging grants to local healthcare system partners, and partners with Extended Stay America.

"Thank you more than I can ever put into words for the care and caring shown to me in the most challenging of lifetime experiences." – Connie – ACS Nashville Hope Lodge® guest

Additionally, the American Cancer Society provides the Health Equity Ambassador program that trains trusted community volunteers to educate African American/Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and rural populations on cancer. Through this program we can address disparities by providing outreach and education to the community.

The American Cancer Society also offers tools like screening locators, resource guides, and videos for caregivers. ACS CARES is a new nationwide patient navigation support program that uses multiple channels to connect with patients, assess their individual needs, and then connect them with resources and support to improve their cancer journey. We also offer access to care programs that improve palliative care support and access to health insurance efforts.



Q: HCA Healthcare partners with the American Cancer Society in supporting the Hope Lodge® community in the Nashville market. Can you explain this partnership a bit more?

A: HCA Healthcare has committed \$500,000 over 2 years to fund key renovations at our American Cancer Society Nashville Hope Lodge® community, including updating guest suites.

Additionally, HCA employees often volunteer to serve meals, assist with cleaning, or host game nights. This holistic partnership helps guests focus on the most important thing – getting better.

Thanks to partners like HCA Healthcare, we can help remove barriers to care and provide people facing cancer and their caregivers with free lodging when the best treatment is far from home. In an average year, our Memorial Foundation Hope Lodge® in Nashville provides over 10,000 nights of free lodging, saving guests an estimated \$1,500,000 in hotel expenses.

Across all our 30+ Hope Lodge® facilities, we serve 29,000 cancer patients, provide 500,000 nights of free lodging, and save \$50M in hotel costs each year. The Hope Lodge® program opened its doors in 1970, and since then, we have provided a total of 6M nights of free lodging to people with cancer and their caregivers.

Hope Lodge® program brings light to families



Joanne F. Pulles serves as Vice President for Community Engagement at HCA Healthcare where she leads a diverse team that manages all aspects of community engagement including social and charitable investment, colleague engagement, and strategic partnerships and scholarships.

Here, she shares more about the Hope Lodge® program:

Question: Tell us about your partnership with the American Cancer Society, how it developed, and why you are supporting their Hope Lodge® program.

Answer: HCA Healthcare and the HCA Healthcare Foundation are proud to have a longstanding relationship with the American Cancer Society Hope Lodge® community in Nashville that has included financial support, as well as regular volunteer engagement. The Hope Lodge® program's model of affordability, support and providing the comforts of home to its guests – which include many patients and families from HCA Healthcare's local affiliate, TriStar Health – is absolutely in keeping with how we fulfill our mission.

"This was the best 'home away from home' we've ever experienced. Everyone here was friendly and helpful and the whole building was unbelievably sanitary. We felt comfortable the second we came through the front doors." – Gerber Family – ACS Nashville Hope Lodge® guests

Q: Please share how this partnership has impacted your business objectives and organizational mission.

A: It is a hallmark of HCA Healthcare – and the Foundation – to partner with organizations in our community in multifaceted ways. Specific to our relationship with the American Cancer Society Hope Lodge® in Nashville we have leaders who invest their time and talent as board members, and we also have colleagues who regularly volunteer to cook meals and be in fellowship with guests. These acts of service are complemented by the financial gifts we have made to help with renovations, ensuring it is a place of respite and comfort for our patients and their families.

The American Cancer Society offers hope, support

With the help of corporate partners, the American Cancer Society can advance health equity, provide patient support programs, and make a tangible, positive impact on the lives of people with cancer and their families.

Together, we can end cancer as we know it, for everyone.

[Learn more about how to become a partner.](#)



#American Cancer Society

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By The American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit [cancer.org](#) or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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