

Most of you know part of the story...

The Roaring 20's is often remembered as an era of flappers, jazz, gangsters, and Prohibition. Americans had endured the hardships of the First World War and had emerged with resilient vitality and ingenuity to direct into their country's growth and prosperity. In Detroit, Henry Ford was mass producing the Model-T; across the Midwest, Burma Shave signs dotted the roadsides; in Pittsburgh, the first public radio station, KDKA, began broadcasting; and in Columbus, Carrie Nelson Black founded the Columbus Cancer Clinic, the first free cancer detection, diagnostic, and treatment center in the United States!

Mrs. Black believed that controlling cancer was a civic responsibility. From its humble beginnings in 1921 at a small office across from Grant Hospital, the Columbus Cancer Clinic has grown and evolved to meet the public's ever changing needs. Today, its services include public education about cancer prevention and early detection, affordable and accessible screening examinations, mammograms, and indispensable home care support, including visiting nurses, medical supplies, medications, groceries, nutritional supplements, wigs, breast prostheses, and transportation to medical appointments.

The members of District 17 have played an important role in the growth and success of the Columbus Cancer Clinic, as evidenced by the honor of receiving their first "Spirit Award" in recognition of our commitment to the Clinic and our passion to help those living with cancer.

Our involvement with the Cancer Clinic began with an idea from one of our members who was a cancer survivor. The year after Bro. Ray Belfrage was our Worthy Grand Patron, a tumor was detected in his femur. This rare bone cancer should have cost him his leg, but a dedicated surgeon studied a procedure done only in England at the time and performed it successfully on him. Bro. Ray's experience with cancer became a life-changing event that would help improve the quality of life for others who were battling the devastating effects of this disease.

About a year after his surgery, while Bro. Ray was investigating volunteer opportunities for his employer, the U.S. Navy, he happened upon the Columbus Cancer Clinic booth at a symposium of local agencies. During his conversation with the clinic representatives, he shared his knowledge of the OES Cancer Dressing Stations he and Dottie had visited in California. The concept held great appeal for the Clinic, because second only to medication, dressings were the most needed item for cancer patients, and they were very expensive, even cost-prohibitive for some of their clients.

The Navy did not benefit from Bro. Ray's encounter with the Cancer Clinic that day, but OES did! Sister Marilyn Rowley had wanted to continue our District's involvement with cancer during her term as Worthy Grand Matron. She hoped to have some type of hands-on project rather than asking members to continue donating money. Her wish was granted when Bro. Ray gathered Eastern Star members to discuss the possibility of making cancer dressings for the Columbus Cancer Clinic. With typical Eastern Star enthusiasm and their overwhelming desire to help others, the District 17 OES Cancer Project was born! Sister Eva McCollister of Groveport Chapter served as the first President, and Sister Mildred White of Bexley Chapter served as Secretary. Members organized and secured the initial funding with donations from all 25 Chapters, the 17th District Association, the 46 Club, and various other auxiliary groups and individual members. The first cancer dressing station daytime workshop opened at Bexley Chapter, and five days later, the first evening workshop opened at Groveport Chapter. Two more dressing stations opened at Robert Morris Chapter and the Columbus Cancer Clinic, bringing the total to four within our district.

We purchased materials and autoclaves and made several different sizes of dressings, packaged, sealed, and sterilized them. The dressings were then distributed free of charge to both OES members with cancer and also to the Cancer Clinic. The clinic's visiting nurses and patients' doctors agreed that our dressings were as good as, and often better than, the ones purchased from medical supply companies.

As word of this project spread, additional cancer dressing stations were formed in other Districts around the state. We sent them the materials; they made the dressings and returned them to us for sterilization and distribution. Some stations also made patient bed pads. In just the second year of operation, members at 8 dressing stations in 4 Districts had volunteered over 17,000 hours making almost 39,000 bandages and 25,000 bed pads.

Our role with the Cancer Clinic has changed over time. When cancer dressings evolved to include medication within the dressing, we were no longer qualified to make them. We did not want to end our partnership with this essential agency, so our creative members discovered a new way to support adults and children living with cancer. Today, 160 volunteer members spend almost 2000 hours a year making "comfort items" to help nourish the spirit of cancer patients. These are specialty items that cannot readily be found in the marketplace. Some examples include soft, warm hats for patients who have lost their hair to chemotherapy, heart-shaped mastectomy pillows to protect tender surgery sites, muslin surgery dolls to aide doctors in visually explaining an operation to a child, relaxing neck pillows, and tray favors to brighten a patient's hospital food tray.

In addition to supplying comfort items for patients, many of our Chapter members donate nutritious food items and paper products like facial tissues, paper towels, and toilet paper to the Cancer Clinic. These supplies are distributed by the visiting nurses to those patients who have to forgo these necessities in order to pay for their cancer treatment and medication. Over the years, we have also donated over \$140,000 to the Cancer Clinic. Our monetary gifts have furnished 2 exam rooms and a wig room and have helped purchase mammogram equipment, a van, and the Clinic's first computers.

District 17 was also blessed to be a part of another cancer project when Bro. Ray was asked to be a General Grand Chapter Committee member in 1979, and the Most Worthy Grand Matron granted his request to be on the Cancer Research Committee. As its chairman, he began fund raising with a statewide variety show, the "All Ohio Cancer Research

Night.” Each District in Ohio was asked to send their very best talent, and a wonderful variety show was held at the downtown Columbus Masonic Temple. Tickets cost \$5.00, over 1100 people attended, and the hugely successful event raised an incredible \$14,000. This, combined with other statewide fund raising projects, resulted in a check for over \$24,000 being presented to Dr. James T. Milton at the Ohio State University to support his cancer research for an entire year.

During Brother Ray’s triennium of service on the Cancer Research Committee, he reported an unprecedented contribution of \$101,446 from the generous Ohio members, and throughout all Grand Jurisdictions, over two-million dollars was raised. In today’s dollars, that equates to over \$5,000,000 that Eastern Star members like you contribute to cancer research. Every dollar you donate truly does make a difference!

This history would not be complete without mentioning our Cancer Walk-A-Thon which provides the majority of the funding for our District 17 OES Cancer Project and cancer research. Many years ago, Bro. Ray had heard a radio news story about a cancer survivor who had sponsored a walk to raise awareness and funding. That survivor’s insightful idea became an annual event in our District 29 years ago. Since our first Walk-A-Thon in 1981, we have raised over \$275,000. Today, about one-third of our Walk-A-Thon proceeds are donated to the Columbus Cancer Clinic to help meet the many and varied needs of area cancer patients. The remaining two-thirds is designated specifically for cancer research and is divided among the Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, and the Grand Chapter Cancer Research Fund. Last year, our donation to the James was applied to the Stephanie Spielman Fund for breast cancer research, and Children’s Hospital used our contribution to further tumor research at their Center for Childhood Cancer Research Institute.

And the rest of the story is...

The “Gift of Life” is yours to give.

We believe that every form of cancer has a cure,
and we understand that every cure
will be discovered through research.
Eastern Star members fund research!

Please support our Walk-A-Thon generously this year.

Do you want to be a part of this great legacy?

- ~ Attend the Cancer Project monthly workshops and help make “comfort items” and tray favors. No experience is necessary. And bring a friend; everyone is welcome!
- ~ Or volunteer from the comfort of your own home: cut material from a pattern, or machine or hand sew, or stuff pillows and dolls, or knit or crochet hats.
- ~ Donate poly-fill, yarn, fleece or cotton fabric.
- ~ Support the Walk-A-Thon with your pledge.
- ~ Come to the picnic June 5th for good food and great fellowship with your Sisters and Brothers.
- ~ Walk 8-11 AM and picnic about 11:30 AM

***For more information,
contact a District 17 OES
Cancer Project representative.***

Cancer Project Officers

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2010 District 17 OES Cancer Project



*The “Gift of Life”
is Yours to Give*

***The 29th annual Cancer Walk-a-Thon
is dedicated to the loving memory of
Sister Ramona McCulty***

Walk-A-Thon Co-Chairs

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