

E-RELEASE - CANCER CONNECTION, INC.

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Ensuring All Who Need Cancer Support Can Access it During
COVID-19--NORTHAMPTON, MA

What is it like to be in the midst of oncology appointments and treatment at a time when we are supposed to stay home if we can? Imagine what it's like to have lost someone to cancer and be isolated in your bereavement or to be living with cancer in a nursing home, or have a loved one who is. "Every week our befrienders, the staff who are talking one-to one with people facing cancer, hear stories that bring home why we need to offer as much of our services as we can by remote methods," said Beverly Herbert, executive director of Cancer Connection in Northampton. "This is a truly frightening time to be dealing with cancer."

Herbert said, "Sometimes we have the befrienders call out of the blue to check in and other times they're returning calls or emails from people who want to chat. The calls are making a difference. Our befrienders are receiving beautiful words of gratitude for the connection and comfort they provide in these calls."

While the organization is considered a nonessential business during the current COVID-19 business closures in Massachusetts, Cancer Connection is implementing online and remote communication options to continue a variety of supportive programs and groups, in addition to the befriending. They would have been offering expressive arts, exercise, relaxation, stress-relieving massage and Reiki, and more in their homey center this spring. "If you are dealing with cancer or are a caregiver to someone who is, and need support around your cancer experience," says Participant Services Director Sheila Kelley, "please know that we are still available to you and hope you will be in

touch with us.” Kelley said that most support groups are continuing to meet through video conferencing or conference calling methods.

“We have shifted a number of other programs online, and are busy figuring out how to shift others to make them available to you as quickly as possible. We will post information about how to access classes and workshops as soon as we can,” Kelley said.

Herbert said that during the business closures, the Cancer Connection Thrift Shop is closed, greatly impacting the center’s bottom line. “What does this pandemic mean for the future of Cancer Connection, the Center and Thrift Shop? We hope to address our current income gaps from the closure of the Thrift Shop and events that have been put off or canceled by applying for Coronavirus Relief Options under the Federal CARES Act.” Herbert said, “We are also exploring other options through local foundations. We will, over the course of the next months, talk with our financial supporters about how we can make ongoing giving doable.” Herbert is hopeful that, “We will survive. We will thrive.”

Herbert urged that, “Whether you use our services, support a participant, offer our programs and integrative therapies, volunteer, donate funds, labor and clothes (hopefully the good stuff!), sponsor, are a Board member, conduct fundraisers and events, or help us spread the word, please know that you are part of our Cancer Connection family and we are here for you. I invite you to get in touch with us. We’re ready to support you, share resources with each other, and keep our connection going through this truly trying time.”

Cancer Connection offers support free of charge to individuals living with a cancer diagnosis and to their loved ones and caregivers. To reach Cancer Connection, call 413-586-1642 and leave a message or send email to info@cancer-connection.org. For more information, visit cancer-connection.org.

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