In June of 2009, Michael went to his doctor because he thought he had restless leg syndrome. His doctor didn’t think this likely so he ran some tests. A colonoscopy revealed that Michael had colon cancer.

Michael had surgery in July, and started chemotherapy in September. His chemotherapy regime is very rigorous, and Michael experiences many side effects, including nausea and dehydration. The most serious side effect has been peripheral neuropathy, a condition in which the nervous system outside of the brain and spinal cord is damaged by disease or cancer treatment, resulting in tingling, pain, or numbness in the extremities. Michael has neuropathy pain in his feet, hands, shins, forearms, jaw and upper lip.

When he started his cancer treatment initially, Michael went on disability from his job as a training instructor and developer. However, in November, he returned to work. “I was going nuts around the house.” Still, working and undergoing chemotherapy has proven challenging.

“It requires a lot of time and energy, and I’ve run out of gas,” he says, as he contemplates going back on disability until his treatment is over, and side effects diminish.

Michael’s biggest source of emotional support has been his family. His wife has been “phenomenal,” and his children and grandchildren have helped keep his spirits up. However, his family has also been a source of worry because he doesn’t know when he will complete his cancer treatment.

Michael has also noticed that he feels more emotionally sensitive to things since his diagnosis. He decided to seek support outside his family, and found an ad for local cancer support groups. There were not any groups offered for colorectal cancer, and he was referred to CancerCare.

Though CancerCare was preparing to form a colorectal cancer support group at this time, Michael ultimately received one-on-one support from CancerCare oncology social worker Sandra Martinez.

Michael benefited from speaking to a CancerCare social worker about his diagnosis.

Michael found speaking to a social worker beneficial. “Mentally and psychologically, I just needed to do that...she was a pair of ears who listened to me.”

Michael remains hopeful and positive through this experience. And CancerCare is there to offer him the help and services he needs along the way.

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. To learn more about CancerCare’s services for colorectal cancer, visit us online at www.cancercare.org.
Volunteer Spotlight

Special thanks to some of CancerCare’s dedicated volunteers

Edwin Stritzl

Edwin started volunteering at our Long Island office 17 years ago. Coming in every afternoon, Edwin handles administrative tasks and assists at our fundraising events, such as the annual golf tournament and Lung Cancer Walk.

The knowledge that he’s helping people keeps Edwin coming back. Sitting at the front desk and receiving feedback like “You’ve made my day” or “You calmed me down” lets him know that he’s making a difference in people’s lives.

Mr. Clay

After being treated for cancer, Mr. Clay’s doctor suggested that he not return to work. Inspired to give back, Mr. Clay found a CancerCare ad in the paper 16 years ago and has been a volunteer ever since.

Mr. Clay helps our Education Department, stuffing packets for Connect Education Workshop mailings, and filling envelopes with checks for our financial assistance program. His supervisor, Carolyn Messner, adds that “having volunteers like Mr. Clay really extends the amount of quality time we are able to spend with each client.”

Mr. Clay has 4 grandchildren and lives in the Bronx.

Norman Smith

Norman was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2007. After his treatment, Norman was eager to get back to work as a hairdresser. However, his doctor advised against it.

Norman had been a part of our Lung Cancer Support group, and he really appreciated the help. He decided to offer his services to help other CancerCare clients learn how to care for and wear the free wigs that CancerCare provides. He has helped more than 70 people since he started his volunteer position last February. Of his workspace, Norman says, “I call it ‘The Happy Room’ because we make smiles here. I haven’t had one disgruntled client yet.”

Greeting clients and answering the phone, Edwin describes himself as “the first line of defense.”

“IT’s very heartwarming for me to do this, and I want to give back.”

I am so pleased to welcome you to the March edition of Community News. I’m entering my third month as CEO of CancerCare, and as a social worker who has known and referred to this organization for most of my career, I am well aware of the importance it plays in the lives of those diagnosed with cancer.

In this edition you’ll meet Michael, a colon cancer client who turned to us when he needed support coping with his diagnosis. I think you’ll find his optimism very inspiring, and we are so glad we are able to provide him with assistance.

In my time here so far, I’ve enjoyed meeting the staff that makes this assistance possible. You’ll read about one of our staff members, Alisha Ellis, an oncology social worker whose efforts on the L’Oreal Paris Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Hope Line provide much needed support to women with ovarian cancer and their caregivers.

We are also lucky to have a group of dedicated volunteers who support our staff in our mission. Volunteers are the lifeblood of a nonprofit organization and the three individuals featured in this issue have a combined 34 years of helping CancerCare and its clients. Mr. Clay assists with our education workshops while Edwin offers a warm welcome to visitors at our Long Island office and Norman provides his hairstylist services to women seeking help with styling the free wigs that we offer to clients.

Thanks to their service, we are able to help more people better cope with the day-to-day needs and challenges that a cancer diagnosis brings. A cancer diagnosis changes one’s life forever. Thank you for reading, and thank you for your ongoing support.
The Cookie Bake-Off

On January 18, CancerCare for Kids® clients and their families participated in a Cookie Bake-Off to create colorful designs for the upcoming Treasures of the Sea Gala, a charity event that benefits CancerCare’s children’s programs.

This is one of several therapeutic activities offered by CancerCare for children whose family members have been affected by cancer.

Pastry chef Ariel Pourrieux of Abigail Kirsch Catering was on hand to guide the children in rolling the dough and icing the cookies.

Candy for a Cause

On February 11, more than 100 young professionals from the New York area sought the warmth Dylan’s Candy Bar for a charity benefit hosted by the CancerCare Junior Committee. The 2nd Annual Sweet Charity: Candy for a Cause raised awareness and funds for CancerCare’s free support services for people facing cancer.

Alisha Ellis, MA, LMSW
Clinical Coordinator
L’Oreal Paris Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Hopeline

Alisha has always been dedicated to giving back. After completing her undergraduate degree at Spelman College, Alisha worked in the financial service industry. Alisha enjoyed this work, but spent her evenings and weekends volunteering with social service organizations. Her experiences volunteering with organizations that served families coping with Alzheimer’s disease, mental illness and HIV/AIDS influenced her to return to school full time to pursue her Master’s Degree in social work.

Alisha came to CancerCare during her social work field placement, and discovered she was interested in working with clients and caregivers who are faced with significant medical and emotional stressors due to a cancer diagnosis. Today, Alisha’s role includes providing counseling support via the L’Oreal Paris Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Hope Line.

The telephone line provides support to women and caregivers of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Additionally, Alisha has recently launched an online ovarian cancer support group, and will be starting a telephone group soon. Says Alisha: “I’m most proud to be helping clients and caregivers at a point in their lives when support is so crucial.”

For more information about our services for ovarian cancer patients and their families, please call the L’Oreal Paris Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Hope Line at 877-OVHOPE1.
Upcoming Connect Workshops

Connect Workshops can be listened to live over the telephone and on the internet. The workshops can also be replayed as podcasts on the web or via telephone.

Upcoming Connect Education Workshops

- April 13, 2010: Trouble Sleeping? Sleep Better to Feel Better: Tips You Can Use
- April 15, 2010: Brain Tumors: Current Treatments and Hope for the Future
- April 16, 2010: Advances in the Treatment of Head and Neck Cancer

Visit www.cancercare.org/connect for more information, or to register for these free workshops.

Read Connect® Booklets Online — Instantly!

Coping With Nausea and Vomiting From Chemotherapy

Treatment Update on Brain Tumors: Glioblastoma

Advances in the Treatment of Multiple Myeloma

These three booklets are now available online in HTML format, with a new, updated look that makes them even easier to read. View them instantly — no need to download a PDF. More titles in CancerCare's award-winning Connect series will be available in this format soon.

All CancerCare publications are available free of charge, online or in print. Visit www.cancercare.org/reading_room for more information.

In Their Words...

"I just wanted to thank CancerCare for assisting me in helping my patients on the oncology floor. Your website and literature have been extremely helpful, and I always recommend CancerCare for community assistance."

-Paula G., LSW
Livingston, NJ

CancerCare is proud to hold the coveted 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator.

www.charitynavigator.com

www.cancercare.org