MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIR

Let me start by stating that it is an honor and privilege to serve as co-chair of such a wonderful organization. I look forward to the challenges associated with the position and hope that during my tenure I will help to make Moffitt Pinellas Partners grow.

Next I want to personally thank Marsha Droste and Mary Harvey for their dedication and efforts to grow the partnership. Their guidance and leadership will be difficult to duplicate.

We had a wonderful turnout for our February 26th reception. Thanks to Gator Handley and the owners of the Windward Bar & Grille, Phil Zieger and George Lefevre, for their generous sponsorship. It seems that there are always members stepping up to the plate to offer their support, and we cannot thank you enough.

It was informative listening to our co-grant winner ($52,500), Dr. David Shibata, discuss colorectal cancer clinical research and clinical trials. To have such fine doctors working tirelessly to combat this horrific disease brings hope that someday soon we may find treatments and cures for not only this form of cancer, but others as well. Although our other co-grant winner ($52,500), Dr. Anna — besides doing the great job of attending our reception we are most appreciative of her efforts as well.

We now have the new Legacy level membership and welcome new Legacy members Kelly Schmidt, Otto and Juanita Hoernig, Suzanne Piper and Lew Shortz. We are happy to welcome you into the fold. For further information on the Legacy level or our other membership levels, please contact Eric Major at (813) 745-8333 or via email: Eric.Major@Moffitt.org. He will be happy to discuss additional details.

Thank you again for playing a critical part in the fight against cancer!

Suzy Circle | Co-Chair, Moffitt Pinellas Partners | Partners Member

Small Steps Bring Hope to Moffitt Patients

By Bill Swisher, Moffitt Pinellas Partners

Greg Feldman, who tells the story of his battle with pancreatic cancer elsewhere in this newsletter, is one of the lucky ones. Not because he had cancer, but because “almost everyone that gets it dies,” said Dr. Gregory M. Springett, a medical oncologist in the Department of Gastrointestinal Oncology at Moffitt.

Pancreatic cancer is “one of the most difficult cancers, and one where there is the greatest need for progress. We have slightly better treatments today than 10 years ago, but the difference between then and now is only a few months,” Springett said.

“It wasn’t unusual in my first year or two here for patients to be diagnosed by their primary-care physician and immediately be told, ‘Cash in your 401k and enroll in hospice.’ We set about changing that,”

Springett and his department chair, Dr. Mokenge P. Malafa, established a multi-disciplinary Pancreatic Cancer Clinic “where patients who wanted to at least try to fight their cancer could come.”

Besides doing the genetic research that goes on throughout Moffitt, they “decided to use the tools we have as expertly as we can, and also make Moffitt a place where we’re trying to push the boundaries — hopefully in big jumps, but in small steps if that’s the best we’re able to do.”

One such step involves both chemotherapy and surgery; Almost all curable pancreatic cancer patients are those whose tumors have been removed entirely. Unfortunately, that’s only about 20 percent, Springett said. But there’s another group of patients who, “if their tumor was a little bit smaller, or a little bit separated from the vessels that run through the pancreas, could potentially be cured by surgery. So we have targeted this area for improvement and have been very successful.”

Springett, Malafa, radiation oncologist Dr. Sarah Hoffe and several of their Moffitt colleagues created a course of treatment for this group, called borderline resectable patients.

“It involves intensive chemotherapy with one of the ‘cocktails’ of drugs known to cause the greatest shrinkage in the short term. We use an innovative technology [that] combines high-dose radiation with very accurate targeting using advanced, computerized control of the radiation,” he said.

Moffitt has been using this technique since 2009 and has “started to see things that people previously would have said were impossible,” Springett said.

CONTINUED
PANCREATIC CANCER PATIENT: ‘Moffitt saved my life’

By Greg Feldman

Greg Feldman is a retired building contractor who lives in Seminole with his wife Melissa and son Jack. In the latter part of 2011, I noticed my weight was dropping without any cause. I was 55, robust and hardy, and had never had an unhealthy day in my life. I called my general practitioner, who did a complete physical, EKG, lab tests — everything. They told me I was healthy but might be lactose intolerant.

My wife thought that was crazy, so I made an appointment with a gastrointestinal specialist in St. Pete, Dr. Mihir Patel, who was much more thorough. He suggested a CT (computed tomography) scan, so I had one near where I live. Within two hours, he called and said, ‘We have a problem’ — a suspicious spot on my pancreas. He said, ‘Let’s hope it’s not a tumor, but you need to go to Moffitt.’

I told him I’d heard about a lot of good places on this side of the bridge, and he said in his professional opinion, if I had what he thought I had, ‘that’s the only place in the Southeast you should go.’

When I went to Moffitt, I was pleasantly surprised at the size and magnitude of their facilities. It’s like the five-star hotel that you don’t want reservations for. I had a battery of tests and consultations and then met with Dr. Pamela Hodul, the surgeon who had sat down with the cancer specialist, Dr. Gregory Springett, and with Dr. Shivakumar Vignesh, who was wonderful. We decided what the course of treatment would be.

Cancer is the hardest mental and physical exercise you’ll ever experience. My treatment included removal of my pancreas entirely, part of my upper intestine and stomach, my spleen and gall bladder. It was very scary for my family, but Dr. Hodul could make you feel positive about removing your head. I became an instant diabetic and so my life changed immediately, included removal of my pancreas entirely, part of my upper intestine and stomach, my spleen and gall bladder. It was very scary for my family, but Dr. Hodul could make you feel positive about removing your head. I became an instant diabetic and so my life changed immediately.

I recovered for a short time and then did six months of chemotherapy. Along with that I learned of a clinical trial, which they said was one more step I could take to ensure that the cancer wouldn’t return. The trial lasted a little longer than the chemo and then, in October 2012, it was recovery and monitoring.

Paddle Against Cancer is May 23rd

Gene Evans, Moffitt Pinellas Partners Co-Chair, is hosting his 5th annual Paddle Against Cancer on Saturday, May 23rd. It will feature 3-mile and 7-mile paddles around Treasure Island, followed by a celebration from noon to 4 pm at The Club at Treasure Island pondside with live music, food, cash bar, silent auction, and free paddleboard demos. For more information on how you can become a sponsor or participate visit PaddleAgainstCancer.org. All proceeds will be directed to Moffitt Pinellas Partners to fund Moffitt’s cancer research.

Moffitt’s Mission Statement is to contribute to the prevention and cure of cancer through education and outreach in an effort to support the work of the physicians and scientists working to cure this terrible disease that has touched all of our lives in one way or another.