

Meals delivery program aims to ease burden on cancer patients

RALEIGH — A new program aims to ease the burden on breast cancer patients by providing them with nutritious meals during their treatment.

The program, Magnolia Meals at Home, is free and delivers frozen meals to patients and their families at their homes throughout the Triangle.

Mary Lawrence, president and chief executive officer of Cornucopia Cancer Support Center, a partner in the program, said the meal delivery makes it easier for patients to eat healthy food during a difficult time.

“Nutrition is important for everyone. But for those who are undergoing treatment, it is especially important,” she said.

Beyond nutrition, the program makes it easier for patients who are often in charge of cooking and cleaning up after meals, she said. With a reserve of frozen meals, they can devote more of their energy to their health and relationships.

Magnolia is funded by pharmaceutical company Eisai, which works with local partners Cornucopia and Meals on Wheels of Wake County to identify patients and prepare the meals.

Eisai employees who work at the company’s Research Triangle Park location volunteer to deliver the meals.

“We’re all good at what we do individually, and we’re pulling our resources together,” said Alan Winstead, executive director of Meals on Wheels.

Linda Abu, who lives in Morrisville, was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in February 2013.

Later, she saw a sign for Cornucopia, and decided to check the center out online. That’s where she learned about Magnolia.

Abu, a retired culinary arts teacher, said the meal delivery, which lasts for up to two months, helped her during hormone treatments.

She liked knowing that she had a nutritious meal option tucked away in the freezer for the days when she didn’t feel up to cooking or her adult children couldn’t help. Plus, she enjoyed talking with the volunteers who delivered the meals.



Volunteer Reese Mars packs food at Meals on Wheels of Wake County. The nonprofit is part of a collaboration with pharmaceutical company Eisai and the Cornucopia Cancer Support Center that delivers meals to breast cancer patients and their families.

“I was so grateful,” she said. “I really appreciated that the community had a concern for me.”

Lou Arp, general manager at Eisai in RTP, said volunteering gives employees a chance to connect with patients and inspires them to do their best work. It can also spark ideas about new or improved products.

After delivering meals to Abu, Arp said he had a better idea of what patients’ days are like.

“I feel like she shared some personal experiences that help me understand what she was going through,” he said.

Eisai, the U.S. pharmaceutical subsidiary of Tokyo-based Eisai Co. Ltd., started the Triangle program in late 2013.

The program is also available in and around Woodcliff Lake, N.J. and Andover, Mass., other Eisai locations, where 400 families already have participated.

There are no income restrictions to participate, and patients do not have to have any affiliation with Eisai. The program primarily serves those currently undergoing treatment or who have recently been admitted to the hospital for a cancer-related issue.

Patients can receive 10 meals a month and 10 more for family members.