

## Triangle meal service delivers to cancer survivors

by Latisha Catchatoorian, February 13, 2014



Linda Abu, a recent New York transplant to the Triangle, was diagnosed with breast cancer in February 2013. Abu, who has children who live in the area, relocated because of better health care options.

"I came during the summer to get a second opinion at UNC-Chapel Hill," Abu said. "I fell in love with the doctor, and I decided I was

going to take early retirement and move out here. (The cancer) had metastasized to my bones, and I didn't want to go through severe winters and falls."

Soon after she moved to the area, Abu passed a sign for the Cornucopia Cancer Support Center in Durham and immediately went home to search for it online. It was there she saw the Magnolia Meals program.

Magnolia Meals at Home is a food delivery service specifically designed for households affected by breast cancer.

"The program is a partnership among the Eisai Women's Oncology Program-Magnolia, Cornucopia Cancer Support Center, CancerCare, Cancer Support Community and Meals on Wheels Association of America," Cornucopia Operations Coordinator Will Pulley said.

"Eisai has been a supporter of Cornucopia for a number of years, and when they were planning the program's expansion into the Raleigh-Durham area, they reached out to us."

Pulley said the goal of Magnolia Meals is to help ease the stress of daily living so that loved ones can spend more quality time together. Eligible participants receive up to two months of home deliveries, which includes 10 nutritional meals for the patients and up to 10 meals for family members, if needed.

"A nice young man comes over here dressed in a suit and tie with meals for me," Abu said. "I've heard of Meals on Wheels, but these meals were frozen and dated and had the nutrition information along with them. The presentation was like a fine dining experience."

To be eligible, a patient must fill out an application followed by subsequent verification that she is undergoing treatment and lives in designated zip codes.

Meals on Wheels of Wake County reaches out to eligible participants and sets up meal deliveries. Employees at Eisai volunteer and make the meal deliveries.

A patient can be currently undergoing chemotherapy, radiation or hormone therapy, or took treatments in the last three months, have been discharged from a hospital (admission was cancer related) in the last three months, and/or receiving adjuvant or neoadjuvant treatment.

"Families coping with breast cancer often find their daily routines significantly disrupted by the many stressors that accompany a cancer diagnosis," said Christine Verini, vice president of corporate communications and advocacy at Eisai.

"Not only does Magnolia Meals at Home aim to help meet the nutritional needs of households affected by breast cancer, it also helps provide emotional support by enabling loved ones to spend more quality time together, and through interaction with the meal delivery volunteers."

Abu said her doctors tell her she is progressing "very well," but when she was initially diagnosed she was devastated.

She said to cope she prayed for healing. Receiving the meals during her chemotherapy was helpful because she came back from treatments fatigued, and the last thing she felt like doing was getting in the kitchen.

"It's like a little extra, a little insurance, and they're tasty," she said. "When you're not able to do stuff, you can put it in your microwave and in seven minutes, it's done."

Pulley said programs like Magnolia Meals are important because they provide much needed support to those journeying with breast cancer.

"Individuals faced with a breast cancer diagnosis encounter many challenges in their daily life which become time consuming," he said. "The Magnolia Meals at Home program aims to help give an individual or family some relief from planning for and preparing meals."

For more information, call Pulley at (919) 401-9333.

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