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Backus Hospital  
Hartford Hospital  
MidState Medical Center  
The Hospital of Central Connecticut  
Windham Hospital

  
**Hartford  
HealthCare**  
Cancer Institute

Member, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance

# Plus



# Dedicated!

Cancer center officially  
opens with week  
of special events



**Donna  
Handley**

Vice President  
of Operations,  
Hartford  
HealthCare  
Cancer  
Institute

## Off and running in New Britain

What a week of extraordinary celebration and enthusiasm on display for the opening of our new cancer center in New Britain, the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC). From June 15-20, we saw hundreds of people from across the region and the state turn out to applaud this transformative new resource for cancer care in our communities — a reminder of the impact that our work is having on those who need us most.

I was frequently moved to see so many people who not only were dazzled by the scope and scale of this new facility, but also by the warmth and commitment of the caregivers who work there. It's that combination — sophisticated clinical expertise and compassion — that sets us apart from any other cancer program in our state.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony June 16, we heard from Francine Shanfield, a married mother of two grown children, whose experience with breast cancer is representative of the goals behind our Institute. After having her cancer detected early, she turned her care over to Kristen Zarfos, MD, medical director of the

Comprehensive Breast Health Center at HOCC, who along with her dedicated staff provided the exact course of personalized care that Shanfield needed to put the disease behind her.

Of course, for many other patients, cancer is a far scarier monster to contend with. At the Survivors Day celebration outside the new cancer center June 20, former breast cancer patient Lori Blanco left hardly a dry eye in the crowd after speaking about the journey she went through and the journey that her sister, newly diagnosed, is now embarking on.

I am so grateful to all those who took part in the many celebrations marking the opening of this wonderful new center for cancer care, especially to the people whose dedication and hard work have allowed this vision to become reality. In the end, it will make all the difference for the patients who come to us looking for that unique combination of clinical sophistication and heart.



**FULL STORY,  
PAGE 5**

## Women receive free mammograms at new cancer center

**F**orty-five women from across Central Connecticut received free mammograms June 27 at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, the newly built comprehensive cancer center on the New Britain-Plainville town line.

The mammograms were provided by The Hospital of Central Connecticut's Comprehensive Breast Health Center, which is located in the new facility at 201 N. Mountain Road off Interstate 84. The mammograms were offered as part of a grant from the Charlotte Johnson Hollfelder Foundation and Susan G. Komen for the Cure to support breast cancer prevention.

The breast center's Early Detection Program offered mammograms and ultrasounds to women between 40 and 64 who have no



Health staff member Irena Steeves, right, helps patient Carmen Baez during a mammography screening June 27 at the new Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute facility at The Hospital of Central Connecticut.

health insurance or have a deductible of \$1,000 or more. Eligible women included those who had not received a mammogram in the previous 12 months, women with no history of breast cancer or women with no current symptoms or breast issues.

Women were provided a preliminary report after their exams, and

a breast radiologist, breast surgeon and breast nurse navigator were on hand to answer questions. Light refreshments and chair and hand massages also were offered.

The breast health center offers free mammograms and ultrasounds to eligible women throughout the year. Call **860-696-4983** or **860-696-4815** for more information.



Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.



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### On the cover

Gathered at the June 16 formal ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the new cancer center are, from left: Elliot Joseph, president and CEO of Hartford HealthCare; Erin Stewart, mayor of New Britain; Lucille Janatka, senior vice president of Hartford HealthCare and president of the Hartford HealthCare Central Region; Francine Shanfield, former breast cancer patient; Donna Handley, vice president of operations for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute; Kristen Zarfos, MD, director of The Hospital of Central Connecticut Comprehensive Breast Health Center; and Katherine Pugliese, chairwoman of the Plainville Town Council.

## Dr. Rajani Nadkarni named a Healthcare Hero

**W**hen oncologist Dr. Rajani Nadkarni entered medical school in India in 1979, little did she know the impact she would have on the field of medicine years later. That impact was made more tangible last week when she was announced a recipient of the Connecticut Hospital Association's 2015 Healthcare Hero Award.

Developed in 2002, the HealthCare Hero Award celebrates the importance of healthcare careers and the accomplishments of providers.

In a heartfelt nomination, Dr. Nadkarni was lauded for her many achievements, one of which is pioneering genetic counseling and cancer risk-assessment services at MidState Medical Center. Hundreds of patients have benefited from this important service, and now the risk clinic model she and her team developed is being reviewed for imple-

mentation across the entire Hartford HealthCare system.

Dr. Nadkarni advocates for quality and patient safety and has held numerous leadership positions, including medical staff president; chair of the Credentials Committee; and member of the Hartford HealthCare Bylaws Committee, Hartford HealthCare



Nadkarni

Cancer Institute Operations Committee, and Disease Management Team Lead at MidState for breast cancer.

Beyond her professional accolades, she also is recognized for continually demonstrating care, concern and compassion to her patients.

"She frequently models a dedica-

tion to a 'person' and not only a 'disease,'" said one nominator.

Recently, she donated money so that tablets could be purchased for the oncology waiting room, giving patients the opportunity to learn more about their diagnosis, medications, health and wellness. She also held vigil with the family of a dying patient to comfort them when medical interventions were no longer an option.

"I feel privileged and grateful to be named a Healthcare Hero. I am also very humbled. As a leader, I've always felt my goal is to mentor and develop the skills of those around me. I hope this means I have done that job," said Dr. Nadkarni.

Still, she finds the interaction with her patients to be the most rewarding. "It is the thank-you notes I receive from them describing how I've touched them as a caregiver that mean the most to me," she said.

### IN THE NEWS

#### Researchers hope to stop cancer by taking aim at metabolism

A research study in *Cancer Cell* suggests that cancer cell growth can be stopped by targeting the Warburg Effect, a trait of cancer cell metabolism that gives cancer its energy source.

The research targets a broad principle that applies to almost every type of cancer and is something that researchers at Saint Louis University are trying to exploit. Their study, which was conducted in animal models and human tumor cells in the lab, showed that a drug developed at Scripps Research Institute can stop cancer cells without causing damage to healthy cells or leading to other severe side effects.

The Warburg effect is the term used to describe how cancer cells typically reveal a preference for using glucose for fuel as they work to proliferate. In the process, cancer cells grow accustomed and even addicted to these pathways for metabolic growth. By developing drugs that block the pathways that provide cancer cells with access to glucose, the research-

ers have discovered that cancer cells will either die or revert to being normal, non-cancerous cells.

Though the research is still in its working stages, researchers are hopeful it can lead to a new class of cancer drugs soon.

#### Men need to take preventive steps

The American Cancer Society expects more than 848,000 new cases of cancer to be diagnosed in men this year, with 312,150 deaths. During National Men's Health Month in June, the society and the American Cancer Society took the opportunity to encourage men to get on the path to a healthier lifestyle.

The Society recommends adopting healthier nutritional habits. Cut back on red meat and processed foods and eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than two drinks a day and less than that ideally. Along with eating a healthier diet, men should get more exercise, cut out tobacco products and be sure to get regular cancer screenings.

## For breast cancer patient, fear takes a back seat

When Francine Shanfield was diagnosed with breast cancer last year, she knew it was a serious situation that demanded the best medical care available. But at the same time, she said, she never felt the panic or fear that many patients experience when first diagnosed with cancer.

“For some reason, I was pretty calm about it from the start,” said Shanfield, a Simsbury resident who was treated by Dr. Kristen Zarfos, a breast surgeon at The Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC). “Some people think you have to go out of state, but I had a confident feeling from the outset that I had found a team of top-notch doctors right here in Connecticut.”

Shanfield was one of the keynote speakers at the June 16 ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute’s new cancer center in New Britain. During her comments, Shanfield expressed gratitude for the expert care and compassion she received during the course of her treatment.

Shanfield, 57, said she was fortunate because her cancer was detected in the early stages. Married with two grown children, Shanfield said she also felt immediately comfortable with Dr. Zarfos and her staff, who have offices at The Hospital of



Former patient Francine Shanfield spoke at the June 16 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at the Hospital of Central Connecticut.

Central Connecticut’s Comprehensive Breast Health Center. The center is part of the newly built facility that adjoins the spacious and welcoming new cancer center.

Shanfield’s cancer was quickly and efficiently diagnosed using the latest in imaging technology, and Dr. Zarfos set up an appointment to surgically remove Shanfield’s tumor less than a month after the diagnosis. Because the procedure went smoothly, Shanfield did not require extensive follow-up treatment options such as chemotherapy or radiation. Instead,

she was asked to return for a series of examinations to ensure that the cancer was entirely gone.

Six months later, there are no signs that the cancer has returned. Shanfield credited the expertise and resources available through the cancer program within The Hospital of Central Connecticut, but also attributed her experience to the caring nature of the specialists who treated her.

“It was amazing how much everyone paid attention to me as a person,” she said. “I never felt like I was just another patient. That made such a difference in eliminating any anxiety I might have felt.”

Dr. Zarfos said the kind of care that Shanfield received represents the guiding mission behind the cancer program at HOCC.

“We want our patients to benefit from our range of resources, our technology and our staff of experts and specialists. All of the staff in our program take pride in establishing caring and meaningful relationships with the patients in our care,” she said.

## Dr. Byeff honored

Peter D. Byeff, MD, left, the medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, received the prestigious Heritage Award from the Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association at a June 5 ceremony at Johns Hopkins from Paul B. Rothman, MD, dean of the medical faculty at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Byeff, who earned his medical degree at Johns Hopkins, was recognized for his support of the university mission and his record of clinical research and visionary leadership in the delivery of world-class cancer care to the people of central Connecticut.



## Stacey Barber named a Gold Medal Manager

Stacey Barber, RN, OCN, operations manager for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, recently was named a Gold Medal Manager. The Gold Medal Manager program spotlights managers who exemplify the values of Hartford HealthCare and the H3W leadership behaviors. Barber, who has worked for HOCC for seven years, was nominated by members of her staff. Here’s what they had to say:

■ “She always shows us that we are valued employees. She knows that we work hard and do our job. Because of that, we work even harder for her. She makes us feel as though we matter and play a valuable role in our organization.”

■ “She is an excellent support to staff that do not report directly to her.”

■ “She is a manager that knows how to be the boss while making us all feel equal.”



Stacey Barber, RN, OCN, operations manager, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, recently was named a Gold Medal Manager.

Barber says she is proud to have been nominated by her staff, regardless of whether she won the award

or not. “It’s my role as a leader to coach, mentor and influence for the better,” she said.

## MidState Medical Center team supports Relay for Life



The MidState team at the Meriden-Wallingford Relay for Life event, from left: Gary Tansino, MD; Mary Smullen, RN; Wendy Gardner, medical administrative associate; Carolina Starr-Manning, RN; Karen Pierce, RN; LaTonya Lewis, medical administrative associate; Leslie Martinez, medical administrative associate and her daughter.

A team of 12 staff from MidState Medical Center turned out to walk and support the Meriden-Wallingford Relay for Life held May 29 at Sheehan High School in Wallingford. Staff took turns walking and manning a hospital booth that offered information on cancer screening, prevention and survivorship. Tina Rodriguez, outreach coordinator, served as the team captain. Gary Tansino, MD, medical director for MidState’s cancer program, was one of the evening’s keynote speakers, delivering remarks to a crowd of 640 people, 150 who are cancer survivors.

“Over the next 24 hours, we will join our patients, families, friends, coworkers, community agencies and the American Cancer Society, all with the common goal of recognizing and supporting cancer survivors. Today we remember and honor those who have passed, raise awareness about cancer and raise money through this amazing fundraising event,” said Dr. Tansino.

During the opening ceremony, Dr. Tansino recognized the family of James Donnan, a former patient who recently lost his fight with kidney cancer. “Our staff got to know him and his wife well, and as with many of our patients, felt them to be friends. His generous family is now keeping his memory alive by being avid supporters of this event and helping to raise money for our community services,” said Dr. Tansino.



Mary Thomson Russell in 2004 in Italy. A special cancer research fund in her memory has been set up at Hartford Hospital.

## Generous spirit lives on in groundbreaking cancer research fund

The condolences describe a vibrant woman: devoted and loving, kind and generous, compassionate and caring; “She made our hearts smile!”

Dedicated to her husband and three children, Mary Thomson Russell touched the lives of her family and friends in meaningful ways before recently losing a strong and graceful battle with cancer. That’s why her husband, Douglas Russell, decided to establish a special cancer research fund at Hartford Hospital in her memory.

“She was generous with her time, she was generous with an encouraging word, she was generous when someone was in need,” said Douglas Russell, who is a senior vice president at MassMutual Financial Group. “She was also the most selfless person I knew—thinking of the other person first and always. And it did not matter whether you were a family member, a great friend or merely an acquaintance.”

Mary Thomson Russell was just 47 when she was diagnosed with thymoma, a rare cancer affecting the thymus that can be a challenge to cure.

“When localized, it frequently can be treated successfully with surgery and radiation therapy,” said Andrew Salner, MD, medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at Hartford Hospital. “When more advanced, the treatment options are not as effective.”

For six years, Mary Thomson Russell “fought a graceful battle” against the disease, Russell said. “She lived successfully with her cancer because of physicians like Dr. Salner, Dr. Robert Lowe, Dr. Robert Siegel, and Dr. Jack Foster, and the quality of care they provided,” he said.

That quality of care was one of the factors Russell considered when he decided to establish the Mary Thomson Russell Endowed Cancer Research Fund at Hartford Hospital. The permanent endowed fund will

provide support for critical molecular oncology research to identify new targeted therapies for patients diagnosed with more common cancers, such as breast, colon, lung, and prostate, as well as for patients with unique cancers like Mary’s.

“What makes funding this research appealing is the personal way it connects to Mary, the type of cancer that she had, and where the research is going,” Russell says. “We’re moving into a world where targeted types of treatment will grow. This fund will be able to make a difference.”

As the charter member of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer (MSK) Alliance, the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute is working to bring cancer patients in Connecticut unprecedented access to breakthrough research and innovative treatment options. An important focus of the research relationship will be active participation in molecular oncology-tailored research studies.

“Many of our new clinical trials will look for unique molecular fingerprints in cancer cells that can be matched to a new targeted therapy,” Dr. Salner said. “These trials will focus on identifying these particular patients and developing a personalized treatment for them. They are not based on cancer type — i.e., breast or lung cancer — as we have traditionally based our clinical trials but rather on unique molecular signatures.”

The Russell family’s relationship with Hartford Hospital is longstanding. “All our children were born at Hartford Hospital,” Russell says. “Over time, it became an organization that we gave to. As time went on, we started to give a little more.

“It is important for our community to understand just how talented and capable the doctors we have in our own backyard are,” said Russell, who has been a Hartford Hospital incorporator since 2002. “With Memorial Sloan Kettering, Hartford Hospital has an opportunity to become even more pre-eminent.”

## Public tours



Members of the public are greeted in the main lobby of the new cancer center by employee Nadia Woodman, who handed out give-away items and helped people get started on their tours.



Kristoffer Popovitch, regional oncology director for the new cancer center, speaks to members of the public who came to tour the facility June 20.

ments and giveaways.

The weeklong celebration culminated June 20 with a special event for cancer survivors, featur-

ing breakfast and comments from former patient Lori Blanco, who thanked the doctors and nurses and other caregivers who helped

her through her journey. She said the experience has left her hopeful for her sister, who also recently was diagnosed with cancer and is now in treatment.

“The diagnosis of cancer is a devastating blow. The ability to take that and shape it into something positive is a worthy goal,” she said. “It is my sincere belief that as survivors, we owe it those who are fighting today and we owe it to those who sacrificed so much to help us and love us back to health, to live a life of purpose and gratitude.”

Another highlight of the celebration of survivors was a musical performance of the Hartford HealthCare theme song, “We’re Healthier Here,” by a band made up of several HHC employees. The band, called A Few of Us, includes lead singer and guitarist Denise Jones-Gagne, cancer program coordinator for the HHC Central Region; vocalist Caron Wegener from MidState Medical Center radiology; guitarist and backup vocalist John Poland, a nurse’s aide at MidState; and bassist Tom Sekscenski, who works for HHC Information Technology. They rehearsed the song for several weeks leading up to the event. As the performance progressed, several volunteers and staff members began clapping along and eventually much of the crowd joined in.

Afterward, survivors streamed into the building to take part in tours of the facility, followed by more than 100 members of the public who responded to an invitation to tour the building as part of an open house featuring refreshments and give-aways. In all, more than 300 people toured the facility that day.

comments from Elliot Joseph, president and CEO of Hartford HealthCare; Lucille Janatka, senior vice president at Hartford HealthCare and president of the Hartford HealthCare Central Region; Erin Stewart, mayor of New Britain; Katherine Pugliese, chairwoman of the Plainville Town Council; Kristen Zarfos, MD, director of the Comprehensive Breast Health Center; and Francine Shanfield, a former breast cancer patient of Dr. Zarfos who spoke about the hope the new center offers to patients like her.

“Having all the steps, procedures, appointments, follow-ups under one roof, under one team, under the watchful eye of one doctor is honestly a game-changer within the medical community,” said Shanfield, who has been in remission for several months. “Obviously one wants the best medical care available, but that, combined with kindness and compassion, is what the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute embodies.”

The ribbon cutting drew more than 200 people who gathered beneath a tent in front of the building before heading inside for lunch and tours. Later that evening, a formal reception for the many donors who contributed to the project was held, drawing more than 180 people who were eager to tour the facility and celebrate the building’s opening.

The series of events continued with a special tour for Hartford HealthCare (HHC) employees on June 17. More than 50 employees from The Hospital of Central Connecticut and other sites across HHC showed up to view the facility and enjoy refresh-

Continued on next page



Peg Bartoletti holds her 29-year survivor pin at the start of Cancer Survivors Day.



Pat Timbrell, left, and John Daddado dance during a song by A Few of Us.

## Survivors Day celebration



A Few of Us, a band made up of Hartford HealthCare employees, performs at the Cancer Survivors Day celebration.



Cancer survivor Lori Blanco shares her experience as a patient and survivor.

## HHC CANCER INSTITUTE AT HOCC GRAND OPENING

# Dedicated!

Cancer center officially opens with week of special events

Hundreds of people turned out to tour and celebrate the opening of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute at The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC) last month at a series of events meant to showcase the new cancer center’s expansive range of services and amenities for patients.

“We could not be more pleased and honored to officially dedicate this fantastic new resource for comprehensive and coordinated cancer care,” said Donna Handley, vice president of operations for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute, who presided over the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new center June 16.

The ribbon-cutting was one of six events that took place from June 15-20 at the spacious new center, which sits on the New Britain-Plainville town line on North Mountain Road off Interstate 84 — with the cancer center located on the New Britain side and an adjoining Medical Arts Center located on the Plainville side. The facility, which covers more than 140,000 square feet, opened its doors to patients in March after three years of construction on the site of a

Continued on next page



## Medical staff reception

Donna Handley, left, vice president of operations for the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute; and Medical Director Peter Byeff, MD, below, welcome physicians and other providers and caregivers from the Institute who gathered to celebrate the opening of the new cancer center.



At right, Neal Goldberg, MD, director of radiation oncology at the new cancer center, speaks with a guest.



Left, Brian Byrne, MD, medical oncologist, has a conversation with Bret Schipper, MD, surgical oncologist.

## Ribbon cutting

At right, patient Francine Shanfield, left, receives a hug from her doctor, Kristen Zarfos, MD. Far right, Andrew Salner, MD, left, medical director of the cancer program at Hartford Hospital, chats with representatives from the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance including, from left, James Harden, MSK senior vice president for Strategic Partnerships; Wendy Perchick, MSK senior vice president for Strategy and Innovation; and Victor Rabaud, MSK vice president of Affiliations.



Above, more than 200 people gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. At far left, Lucille Janatka welcomes visitors. At left, Francine Shanfield talks about her experiences as a cancer patient.

former rock quarry.

The week of events began June 15 with a reception for physicians and other providers affiliated with the hospital and the cancer institute. More than 70 people showed up for the occasion, which took place in the grand lobby of the cancer center and the

cafeteria looking out onto the reflection garden and pond in the back. Physicians and providers took tours of the service areas within the facility, which include a state-of-the-art Radiation Oncology Center, Infusion Center, Comprehensive Breast Health Center, Imaging Center and centers for

Surgical Oncology and Gynecologic Oncology.

“The vision that we originally had for this space was to make it a place where patients could receive all the care they needed in one setting,” said Peter Byeff, MD, medical director for the cancer program at HOCC, who

welcomed physicians to the reception along with Handley and Rocco Orlando, MD, senior vice president and chief medical officer at Hartford HealthCare. “Being diagnosed or treated for cancer is stressful enough for patients; we wanted to make the experience as convenient and coordi-

nated as possible for them.”

As part of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute, Dr. Byeff noted, the new center is able to take advantage of the Institute’s membership in the Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Alliance, which provides patients with access to many of the

leading-edge clinical trials and protocols being conducted at MSK, one of the world’s premier cancer centers.

The medical staff reception was followed the next day with the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which featured

## Employee tours

Above, Donovan Rocha, a patient ambassador at the new cancer center, leads a group of employees on a tour of the facility. At top left are nurses from The Hospital of Central Connecticut who took part in the tour including, from left, Jessica Warren, Mandy Dibenedetto, Hayley Dunnack and Ellen Shaw. Below, Erik Lyon, HOCC manager of nuclear medicine, talks to tour-goers about some of the cancer center’s imaging technology.



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