

Best Times Article for October 2007

By Commissioner David Lindstrom

The “Partnership for Life Campaign,” which I proudly serve as one of the state honorary chairs, is important to Johnson County and its citizens because it’s a beacon of hope in the War on Cancer. That battle was started almost 36 years ago when President Nixon signed the National Cancer Act into law.

Yet, it’s not the only war that America is facing. The War on Terrorism now is in its sixth year after violent attacks on our homeland against innocent Americans, leading to the ongoing fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While the War on Terrorism rages, the War on Cancer cannot be neglected.

Both wars have striking similarities. The fighting has been difficult and brutally long.

The lives being claimed in these wars are American women, men, our children, and our grandchildren.

The attacks are unprovoked and often come without warning.

The enemy is anonymous, evasive, dangerous, and deadly.

And, we have to seek the enemy out with the full intention and goal to destroy it where it lives.

The battlefields have taken their toll over the years. According to the American Cancer Society’s Cancer Statistics for 2007, cancer will claim 553,888 lives of your family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and countrymen.

Let me repeat that number: 553,888 LIVES.

Now, let me put that in perspective. It’s roughly the same as the population of Johnson County, the most populous county in the State of Kansas with approximately 525,000 citizens. That’s the equivalent of having every man, woman, and child dying in Johnson County – WITHIN ONE YEAR!

On other battlefields, slightly more than 627,000 brave and honorable American soldiers have been killed in warfare from the Revolutionary War to the Gulf War. The total has increased by more than 3,700 in the current War on Terrorism.

Their sacrifices have long protected and preserved our nation’s many freedoms. And, we will always hold dear and respect each and every one of them – past, present, and future.

Yet, the sad fact remains that more people will lose personal battles with cancer in the next 14 months than have perished in every war the nation has ever fought ... COMBINED.

Each day, more than 1,500 people die from the disease.

That is as if one of the World Trade Center towers were collapsing in our nation every single day throughout the year ... FOREVER – if the current tragic trend of cancer deaths continues.

The American Cancer Society warns us that one in two men and one in three women will get cancer during their lifetime.

THEY ARE AMONG US.

THEY ARE US.

Within the next decade, cancer is likely to replace heart disease as the leading cause of U.S. deaths, according to forecast by the National Cancer Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This year, an additional 1.4 million Americans will have the most frightening of conversations with their doctor. And instead of occupying the front pages of our newspapers and being lead stories on the evening news, the War on Cancer is such a fact of American life that we live with the reality that this disease will be a leading cause of death for us and our families.

The fact that cancer can strike any American, anywhere, at any time adds to the fear we feel of this dreaded disease. It does not discriminate by race, religion, or gender. Cancer affects young and old, the rich and the poor, the famous and the average.

But today, thanks to advances in science and technology, a cancer diagnosis is far from a death sentence. I have good friends who have fought that battle and triumphed.

But, we all also are fully aware that cancer can kill, and it is a dangerous adversary.

My sister-in-law, Kathy, fought that battle with all her being, her might, and her faith – and lost. She died last year from lung cancer. Kathy was only 56 years old when she died.

Also late last year, my good friend, mentor, and boss, Lamar Hunt, lost an eight-year battle against prostate cancer at age 74. He was so totally unpretentious, so unassuming, and so down to earth. Lamar Hunt was simply a true gentleman who is greatly missed by both the sports world and fans alike.

We all know people who have faced this fate.

We all know people who have won and lost in their personal War on Cancer.

That's why the Partnership for Life Campaign is important.

For Kansas, the Midwest, and the nation to turn the tide in this brutal war, doctors and researchers at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, Kansas, are working as an army to find better tools for cancer detection at early stages as well as curative treatments. Four years ago, KU offered to name the cancer institute at the medical center to the Kansas Masonic Cancer Research Institute if the Kansas Masonic Foundation would commit to raising \$15 million to assist the institute in gaining National Cancer Institute designation.

That's the purpose of the Partnership for Life Campaign. It will accelerate progress in the War on Cancer. It will result in achievement of a National Cancer Institute designation, similar to the Mayo Clinic and M.D. Anderson medical campuses, placing this Kansas research and medical facility at the frontlines of discovery for the treatment and prevention of cancer.

A nationally-designated Kansas Masonic Cancer Research Institute will help to improve the odds. It will give more Kansans renewed hope, stronger optimism, and a better fighting chance against cancer. And, it will become a lasting legacy by this generation for generations to come in Kansas, Missouri, and throughout the Midwest.

A successful Partnership for Life will touch many lives, including our own and the people we care and love the most.

The War on Cancer is a war worth winning, and in each of our families, we already know the best reasons why.

The painful reality remains that we are all at risk of cancer.

And, we cannot be certain that any of us, or our families, will be spared.

In this war, cancer refuses to surrender.

And, neither shall we.

Cancer is to the patient and their family what terrorism is to a free society. It's a deep personal threat that must be overcome by personal victory – ONE BATTLE AT A TIME.

This is a war in every sense of the word.

It is a war we must win.