

A Place for Guidance

Fighting Chance Open Office in New Cancer Center

When his mother was battling late-stage lung cancer, Duncan Darrow would often drive down to Long Wharf in Sag Harbor, get out of his car, look to the sky, and recite a simple prayer.

“Dear God, all I’m asking for is a fighting chance.”

Charlotte Darrow died in 2001, not long after her diagnosis. But the ritual of reciting that prayer stayed with Mr. Darrow, as did a burning desire to help people who were facing what he and his mother had during the final year of her life — the stress, anxiety and fear that comes with a cancer diagnosis; the sense that they are traveling down an unfamiliar road with no compass, no professional support or guidance, no idea what the future holds, and little, if any, ability to control it. And so, in 2002, he founded a not-for-profit cancer counseling and support services center in Sag Harbor, and he named it Fighting Chance.

Over the 18-plus years Fighting Chance has been in Sag Harbor, it has helped more than 2,000 cancer patients on the East End, providing free one-on-one counseling services, with access to oncology social workers, as well as a comprehensive resource directory for cancer patients, with vital information on everything from pharmacies to transportation options to doctor information and everything in between. The latest chapter in the organization’s commitment to supporting cancer patients on the East End was written last week, when it was part of the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Phillips Family Cancer Center on County Road 39 in Southampton. The Cancer Center includes a satellite office for Fighting Chance, which is provided free-of-charge and will facilitate servicing patients west of the Canal.

Mr. Darrow was at the ribbon cutting on Thursday, April 25, and later spoke about the significance of having office space in the new center. He is both passionate about and confident in the services his organization provides, which comes from nearly 20 decades of experience. He speaks fast, with the energy of someone who is dedicated to his work and determined to make things happen, to cross every T and dot every I. It does not seem like a stretch to say that his background as a Wall Street lawyer has made attention to detail a signature of his personality. Even the décor of the offices is an important consideration, for Mr. Darrow, who said a “shabby chic, down home, comfy” kind of vibe is what he was aiming for in a space where people need to feel as comfortable as possible.

possible while facing perhaps the toughest challenge of their lives. The smaller satellite office at the Phillips Family Cancer Center is meant to replicate the look and feel of the organization’s 850 sq. ft. main office space, in a building overlooking the water on Bay Street, with 11 large windows.



Fighting Chance Office at the Phillips Family Cancer Center

“While the satellite is smaller than our main office in Sag Harbor we want it to have,” Darrow said, “it will provide in miniature, the same feeling of serenity and be able to offer patients the same core services.”

The new office will be split in half by a soundproof wall, with one area for private counseling which will be provided by Lauren Richard-Holt, LCSW-C, an oncology social worker who is joining the Fighting Chance organization and will take charge of the satellite office. The new space will also include a state-of-the-art kiosk that will allow patients to book appointments at either Fighting Chance location. Mr. Darrow said he envisions the new office to function as a sort of “net exporter” of appointments, particularly for cancer patients living east of the Southampton area, who may be making frequent trips to the center for treatment but would rather not travel the same distance for counseling.

Mr. Darrow said that Fighting Chance recently earned accreditation from the Joint Commission, which accredits health care organizations and hospitals around the country, and he added that Fighting Chance is the only organization of its kind in the country to receive that status from the commission.

“They see that what we do is a critical piece of the holistic, all-under-one-roof concept,” he said. “And people know us.”