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Focusing on Hope During Cancer Care

By Jennifer Davis

Hope means different things to different people. At a conference on East End cancer care this Saturday, some 300 people will be asked what it means to them.

“On the back of the program there’s a space titled ‘What hope means to me.’ They can put their name, or not put their name. We are going to put together this definition of hope, something I think the world could use more of right now,” said Duncan Darrow, founder and chairman of Fighting Chance, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping cancer patients and their loved ones.

The “Day of Hope” conference, co-sponsored by Fighting Chance and Southampton Hospital, will bring leading oncologists and cancer research specialists from all over Suffolk County to Sag Harbor’s Bay Street Theatre where they will meet with cancer patients and their caregivers. Special presentations, question and answer sessions and testimonials from cancer survivors will all be part of Saturday’s event. “Last year’s [event] was an incredible day, very educational, very enlightening,” said Susie Roden, a breastcancersurvivorwhoappeared on a panel last year and will speak this year on being a caregiver.

Last year’s conference, held November 12, was the first of its kind on the South Fork. Mind/body experts, social workers and some of Manhattan’s top oncologists were invited to speak on topics such as cancer in the workplace and relaxation techniques.

“This year we’re trying to do something a little bit different. We don’t want to repeat ourselves,” Mr. Darrow said, explaining that the focus of this year’s conference is to bring together many of the local cancer resources in one place. “These are doctors that most people would be more likely to see or go to.”

Conference planners have invited representatives from all of the nonprofit groups that support cancer care in Suffolk County to participate on a panel discussion about patient empowerment and community sup-

port.

“The non-profits in Suffolk County are really starting to cooperate more in terms of presenting a unified front to the cancer patient,” Mr. Darrow said.

The keynote speaker at this year’s conference will be Dr. Martin S. Karpeh Jr., director of the Cancer Center at Stony Brook University Hospital and chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology. Dr. Karpeh will discuss improving cancer care in Suffolk County.

“The Cancer Center at Stony Brook Hospital is modeled on [Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center],” Mr. Darrow explained, adding that all of the doctors meet regularly and review patient cases together. “They all kind of brainstorm with one another. I think it’s similar to Memorial now that they have built up a network of doctors and they can all kind of cross pollinate and cross reference with one another. To me, it seems like a very compelling approach.”

Following Dr. Karpeh, a talk on the “New Attacks on Lung Cancer,” will be given by Dr. Theodore Gabig, chief of Hematology and Oncology at the Cancer Center at Stony Brook.

In addition to the Cancer Center’s heavy hitters, there will be a discussion on nutrition with Donald Garrity, a nutritionist from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan.

“There’s now data and scholarly articles saying you can extend your life and use nutrition as a preventative measure,” Mr. Darrow said explaining the importance of the topic.

Also on Saturday’s agenda is a talk on the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation, two of the most frequently used cancer treatments. Dr. Renu Hausen, a Riverhead-based radiation oncologist, will be on hand to answer questions. In addition, topics such as clinical trials that may lead to the prevention and treatment of prostate, bladder and kidney cancer are planned.