



# A Healthy Outlook!

240-314-1040 • FAX 240-314-1049 • [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/EAP) • Vol.6 No.2

## MCPS EAP Cancer Support Group

**First meeting:**  
**Wednesday, April 9, 2008,**  
**4:30–6 p.m.,**  
**2096 Gaither Road,**  
**Rockville,**  
**Conference Room 3**

“Since my diagnosis I receive many calls from people within MCPS who are recently diagnosed, or have family members dealing with cancer. Some are for referrals to doctors, some for wigs, some for medication, some for advice on tests recommended.” So an MCPS employee describes her communications with colleagues in their quest for information and support. She perceives a need for helping those who are newly diagnosed through the process of selecting an oncologist, understanding treatment options, and becoming empowered to take charge of their treatment. We are hoping that, through a support group, we can create a means to provide information and support for those recently diagnosed as well as those living with cancer during and post treatment.

Join us on April 9 for our first support group meeting. Call the EAP at 240-314-1040, or e-mail Debra Tipton on Outlook for more information. ■

## March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Globally, cancer of the colon and rectum is the third leading cause of cancer in males and the fourth leading cause of cancer in females. The frequency of colorectal cancer varies around the world. It is common in the Western world, and is rare in Asia and Africa. In countries where people have adopted western diets, the incidence of colorectal cancer is increasing. Approximately 93 percent of colorectal cancer cases occur in people 50 and older. Regular screening can help detect colorectal cancer in its earliest and most treatable stage. Men and women should be screened regularly for colorectal cancer, beginning at age 50.

### Colorectal Cancer at a Glance

Colorectal cancer is a malignant tumor arising from the inner wall of the large intestine.

Risk factors for colorectal cancer include heredity, colon polyps, and long-standing ulcerative colitis.

- Most colorectal cancers develop from polyps. Removal of colon polyps can prevent colorectal cancer.
- Colon polyps and early cancer can have no symptoms. Therefore, regular screening is important.
- Diagnosis of colorectal cancer can be made by barium enema or by colonoscopy with biopsy confirmation of cancer tissue.
- Treatment of colorectal cancer depends on the location, size, and extent of cancer spread, as well as the age and health of the patient.

- Surgery is the most common treatment for colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is both preventable and curable. Colorectal cancer is prevented by removing precancerous colon polyps. It is cured if it is found early and is surgically removed before it spreads to other parts of the body. The National Polyp Study showed in its surveillance program that individuals who had their polyps removed experienced a 90 percent reduction in the incidence of colorectal cancer. The few patients in the study who did develop colorectal cancer had their cancer discovered at early, surgically or endoscopically curable stages. Since most colon polyps and early cancers are silent

*continued on page 2*

## In This Issue

- 1 *March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month*
- 2 *On a Beautiful Day in September...*
- 2 *Financial Resources*
- 3 *How People Change*
- 4 *Ask the EAP*
- 4 *Upcoming Events*

...Cancer Awareness Month from page 1

(produce no symptoms), it is important to do screening and surveillance for colon cancer in patients without symptoms or signs of the polyps or cancers. If you are 50 or older, or have risk factors for developing colon cancer, talk to your doctor today about scheduling a screening.

For more information on cancer, please check out the home page of the EAP Web site and look at “Health Tips” and “Useful Links” (<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap/index.shtm>).

## Financial Resources

If you are having a hard time making ends meet financially, assistance is available.

### FINANCIAL:

- **The Department of Health and Human Services of Montgomery County**, provides income supports such as food stamps, temporary cash assistance, medical assistance, and housing. Call 240-777-1245 or look online at [www.montgomery-countymd.gov](http://www.montgomery-countymd.gov) to find out more.
- **SEIU Local 500** has an Emergency Assistance Fund, which provides one-time-only cash assistance based on need and situation. Call 301-740-7100.
- **Money Management International** provides credit counseling and debt management. Call 800-762-2271, or go to [www.moneymanagement.org](http://www.moneymanagement.org).
- **Balance** provides professional financial advice and information, including credit report review, debt management, and housing counseling for first-time home buyers. Contact them at 888-456-2227 or [www.balancepro.net](http://www.balancepro.net).
- **Community Ministries of Rockville and Interfaith Works** provides up to \$250 financial support as well as help with rent, utilities, and prescriptions, depending on location and need. Call 301-762-8682.

## On a Beautiful September Day...

By Eunice Burdette,

Financial Assistant, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs

A beautiful September day included a visit to my doctor for the results of a routine procedure. The news was anything but routine—uterine cancer. I cried. I was afraid. I was depressed. I was convinced that I already had my share of illnesses for a lifetime—diabetes, rare blood disorder, heart attack, and cataract surgery.

I also had to contend with the fact that I was adopted and had no family medical history. I was having a real pity party for myself.

The next several weeks consisted of many tests, many doctors, and an oncologist. My husband is always there for me and reminded me that, together, we will get through this one day at a time. I talked to my cancer buddy about everything. I stopped feeling sorry for myself. I found the support and faith that I need to get through the rest of this cancer journey. My cancer buddy is my hero, my friend, and is always there when

I need to talk. Her cancer is very serious and yet she is the bravest person I know.

On November 5, I met with my cardiologist at 10:00 a.m., had a nuclear stress test at 10:30, and was on my way to the hospital at 11:30 to have surgery at 7:00 that night. Since my surgery, I have had 28 treatments of external radiation. My routine has been working in the morning and radiation in the afternoon. February brings five days of internal radiation (brachtherapy). After that, whatever is necessary.

I am a stronger person because of my cancer journey. I have learned from my cancer buddy, “Yes, you can!” get through this cancer thing. I also have a new cancer family of friends who I love very much. My advice, be proactive—have regular checkups and tests. If you have cancer, you need a cancer buddy and you need support. Please do not try to walk through this journey alone. There are many of us here to walk with you. ■

### HOUSING:

- **Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC)** offers low-cost and subsidized housing options. Contact them at 240-773-9000 or [www.hocmc.org](http://www.hocmc.org).

### FOOD:

- **MANNA Food Center** provides emergency food and a box of staple items. Call the EAP for a referral to MANNA. We can be reached at 240-314-1040.
- **SHARE (Self Help And Resource Exchange)** is an organization where individuals pay \$15 and volunteer; in return they receive \$30 worth of fresh food. Call them at 301-864-3115.
- **HELP, Inc.** is an organization that assists with short-term needs such as food, rent, mortgage, utilities, prescriptions,

and transportation. Contact them at 301-216-2510.

- **Med-Bank** helps people who have no insurance or low income to receive psychiatric medication. Call them at 301-628-3422.
- **Montgomery Cares** provides primary health care services for the uninsured or low-income adults. Contact them at 301-628-3455 or [www.montgomerycares.org](http://www.montgomerycares.org).

### UTILITIES:

- **Mid-County United Ministries** helps with eviction and paying small bills for disconnected utilities. The organization also has a food pantry and will cover some prescription costs. Call them at 301-929-8675.

# How People Change

If you are thinking of changing your life for the better, you are probably hoping to increase your feelings of happiness and emotional well-being. Once you decide to make changes in your life, try the following ideas:

## 1. Explore your feelings.

Write in a journal, work with a professional counselor.

## 2. Envision your future.

Make a collage, do a guided visualization, research the possibilities.

## 3. Explore wishes and dreams.

Talk to a trusted friend.

## 4. Be open to new ideas.

Take a class, travel, say yes to things you may have avoided in the past.

## 5. Look for kindred spirits.

Avoid people who make you feel bad about yourself, seek out those who make you blossom, reach out to those with similar interests and dreams.

## 6. Try something different.

Deliberately buy new items, try different brands, shop at different stores, do the opposite of what you usually do, see different movies, read different kinds of books and magazines.

■ **Salvation Army** provides emergency assistance for electricity and water, based on income 301-515-5354.

■ **Ministries United Silver Spring Takoma Park (MUSST)** helps to prevent eviction and utility cutoff and provides prescription assistance 301-495-4699.

■ **Upper Montgomery Assistance Network** provides help with eviction prevention, security deposit, and disconnected utilities for Germantown, Gaithersburg, and Derwood residents over the phone 301-926-4422 or 301-926-4423.

For more information or to make an appointment with an EAP specialist, please call us at 240-314-1040. ■

## 7. Set goals and targets.

Learn how to set useful goals, follow through, evaluate progress regularly, reward yourself for achievement.

## 8. Take one step at a time.

Divide your goals into tiny pieces and do one small new thing each day, starting now.

## 9. Look for lessons.

Remind yourself that experiences are not good or bad; they are simply lessons.

## How to Overcome Your Resistance to Change

Have you ever noticed that when you think about changing your life, you feel resistant? Many people say that they not only feel resistant, but they actually do things to keep their lives familiar. They do things like start a diet and then eat a candy bar on the first day, or quit smoking and then sneak a puff. There are some things you can do to make yourself less resistant. Here are six effective strategies:

### 1. Eliminate clutter.

Clutter can be viewed as a sign of uncertainty. Accumulating “stuff” might be stopping you from committing to an important thing. If you keep a lot of half-started projects around, it makes it difficult to zero in on the really important things.

### 2. Start small.

Thinking of your overall goal can be overwhelming. So manage your resistance by choosing one small part of it and attacking it today. Let's say your goal is to lose 20 pounds. That can certainly seem like an impossible thing to accomplish. It will seem more doable if you tell yourself, I'm going to lose five pounds by (date).

### 3. Disprove your disempowering beliefs.

In *Reinventing Your Life*, authors Young and Klosko suggest that you identify the beliefs that keep you from succeeding. They offer a way to dispute those beliefs by asking, “Is there really any evidence today that this belief is true?” They suggest making a list of the evidence.

### 4. Remind yourself of all of your available options.

You always have alternatives and the power to choose among them.

## 5. Take responsibility for what you want.

Look for signs that you are blaming your situation on others or not admitting to past mistakes. Acknowledge them and move on.

## 6. Visualize the future.

Author Barbara Sher suggests one way to do this: Write an imaginary press release about yourself. The date is today's date, two years in the future. The press release is announcing the most extraordinary event you can think of. It doesn't matter whether this event seems only vaguely possible to you. The important thing is that it is exciting to imagine.

## When to Seek Professional Help

Sometimes it makes sense to find a professional counselor to work with as you navigate the change process. Here are some ways to know when that would be appropriate:

1. You've tried several things but you still have the problem.
2. You want to find a solution sooner rather than later.
3. You have thoughts of harming yourself or others.
4. You have symptoms of depression, anxiety, or another problem that is significantly interfering with your daily functioning and the quality of your life. For example, you have lost time from work, your relationships have been harmed, or your health is suffering. These are signs that you may need the help of a trained, licensed professional.

## Suggested Reading

Martha Friedman, *Overcoming the Fear of Success*. New York, Warner Books, 1980.  
Susan Jeffers, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*. New York, Fawcett Columbine, 1987.

Barbara Sher, *Live the Life You Love*. New York, Delacorte Press, 1996.

Jeffrey Young and Janet Klosko, *Reinventing Your Life: How to Break Free from Negative Life Patterns and Feel Good Again*. New York, Plume Books, 1994. ■

Adapted from an article by Kim Chung, M.A., licensed counselor and executive director of the South Bay Center, in the *Therapists Newsletter*. Used with permission.

## Ask the EAP

**Q:** Can I be forced to sign a release of information regarding my involvement in the EAP?

**A:** No. It is always up to you whether or not to sign such a form. However, there may be times when it is in an employee's best interests to sign a release of information. One example might be when an employee requests and is approved for work time to attend an EAP appointment. With a signed release of information, we can confirm to your supervisor that you attended the appointment so that you can account for your time. ■

**Think left and think right and think low  
and think high.**

**Oh, the thinks you can think up if only  
you try!**

—Theodor Geisel

Do you have a question for the EAP?  
Send your questions via Outlook or the  
pony to Jeff Becker.



## Upcoming Events

### **National Problem Gambling Awareness Week: March 9–16**

Sponsored by the National Council on Problem Gambling.  
For more information call 202-547-9204, or go to [www.npgaw.org](http://www.npgaw.org).

### **March: National Colorectal Awareness Month**

For more information, call 800-227-2732, or go to  
[www.preventcancer.org/colorectal](http://www.preventcancer.org/colorectal).

### **April: Cancer Fatigue Awareness Month**

Fatigue is the most common side effect of cancer treatment, occurring in more than 90 percent of patients. It is described as feeling physically, emotionally, or mentally tired all the time. The symptoms of fatigue and the resulting lack of energy can interfere with a patient's daily functions. Cancer-related fatigue has many causes, including the cancer itself, cancer treatment and medication, nutrition, psychological factors, and lack of exercise. Talk with your health-care providers so they can assess your cancer-related fatigue and provide you with treatment and ways to cope.

## *A Healthy Outlook!*

*To help employees with  
troubling issues before they  
become overwhelming.*



### EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

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Important Notice: Information in *A Healthy Outlook!* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.

You may contact us or send your questions and comments to  
[Debra\\_Tipton@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Debra_Tipton@mcpsmd.org)

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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