

Delaware SGNA

Newsletter

APRIL 2008

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The weekend of April 11-13 marked the 10th annual multi-regional educational conference titled "Bridging The Chesapeake With Current GI Trends". This year the seminar was held at the Westfields Marriott in Chantilly, Virginia and many great GI topics were discussed. The three regions (Chesapeake, Delaware, and Old Dominion) have worked together to present many successful conferences in the past and this one was no exception. Over 150 Nurses and associates attended the seminar this year. The committee heard many positive comments. Next Years Delmarva's 11th Annual "**Bridging The Chesapeake With Current GI Trends**" will be held at the Dover Sheraton, Dover, Delaware, on March 27-29, 2009. Delaware will be the HOST Region so make plans now to be there.

Delaware SGNA submitted 2 poster abstracts for the National SGNA conference in Salt Lake City, Utah and they were accepted. One of Delaware's members will be speaking at the national conference again this year. So far three of Delaware's members are planning to fly across the country to attend the National Conference. Karen Bell, Delaware's treasurer has volunteered to be a delegate for the House of Delegates, since Delaware's President-Elect is unable to attend. The ten resolutions that are before the house for consideration this year are posted on the front page of the website. Please review them and let Karen Bell or Melinda Huffman know your opinions on these resolutions that may shape your practice in endoscopy or the management of your professional society.

During the National Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah the NEW Core Curriculum will be showcased and available for purchase. Many other new items will also be available at the SGNA Market Place.

Delaware's Fall Education Day planning is under way. We need speakers for this day. The date has been set for Saturday, November 8, 2008. At the last meeting Karen Chatham was named Vendor liaison, forward all prospective vendor information to Karen so we can get vendor letters out soon to invite them to our conference (rkchatham@comcast.net). Cheryl Schmidt has agreed to be Hotel liaison. It is time to get proactive with vendors and colleagues to line up speakers and sponsors for our Fall Education Day. We need at least six more speakers.

*CHESAPEAKE,
DELAWARE and OLD
DOMINION present a
decade of great
education.*

The Greatest Place on Earth

By: Diana M Pasini-Wojnisz, BSN, RN, CGRN

On checking his record, the first words that pierced my eyes were the two I dread most in my field: "pancreatic cancer".

I have been a Registered Nurse since my graduation from the University of Delaware in 1987. While I've practiced in several specialties, including post anesthesia and orthopedics, my favorite area has been gastroenterology, which is where I obtained my certification in 1999. The only thing I don't like (and still don't!) is the early start time. But, I've learned to love the early morning walks from my car and one early September morning in 2002 was no exception.

That particular morning was the kind I love so much, with the mild temperature and the sun promising a warm and joyful day. It was one of those mornings when I would walk slower than usual, savoring the atmosphere, and perhaps, in the back of my mind, knowing my pace would quicken in a few short weeks to adjust to the cold. When I reached the GI Lab, I found the schedule posted and gave it my usual glance, noting no names of family or friends. Thankfully, all was well.

There was one patient on the schedule though-his name was Randy-who caught my eye. He was young, only 30, and I remember saying to myself, "Oh, probably another reflux patient!" The day progresses as usual: procedures, lunch, talk, and laughter with those around me. It was not an unusual day, until I met Randy and his young wife, Molly.

The first thing I noticed about Randy as I introduced myself was how ill he seemed. His skin was pale with a gray hue, his body so slender with hunched shoulders, as if it hurt him to straighten up, and his gaunt face with haunting, protruding cheekbones. But, even more noticeable than his obvious illness were his loving looks toward Molly and the infectious smile he granted me. On second look, I noticed his baseball cap, embroidered with "Dopey" and the small stuffed Disney character, identical to the one on my daughter's bed, in Randy's hand.

Greeting them warmly, I explained I would be Randy's nurse and invited him to change into his gown while I retrieved his paperwork. On checking his record, the first words that pierced my eyes were the two I dread most in my field: "pancreatic cancer". My eyes filled with tears as I wondered how someone so young could be so afflicted with such a dreadful diagnosis.

Quickly recomposing myself, I returned to Randy and Molly and asked, "So, Dopey is your favorite? I relate mostly to Sleepy myself!" They both laughed and Randy told me "Dopey is my man!" I discovered they were leaving in a few days for Disney World. I asked where they were staying. "All Stars", they said in unison, with their eyes twinkling, as if they had unearthed a secret.

I remember Randy being very easy to sedate and his physician commenting on just how ill Randy was. "We told them in June to move this trip up to July; I just hope he makes it through the trip. He is so young." I felt so terrible. I remembered the wonderful times I had shared with my little girl at "the happiest place on earth" and feared Randy would be cheated of this joy. In my heart I knew I had to do something; all of a sudden I hit me and "no" was not an option.



As soon as Randy was in recovery, I called my best friend's husband who works for Disney. "Carl," I started, "I need your help. Who do I call to arrange a private meeting with a character for a terminally ill patient?" Within minutes, Carl redirected my call to Jessica at Disney Guest Relations. Jessica was choking back the tears when I told her of Randy's circumstances and what I needed to do for him. "I cannot take away his pain or help to cure him," I pleaded, "but I can try to make his last vacation with his wife a joyful memory. Thirty year olds aren't supposed to die of pancreatic cancer..."

Jessica promised to return my call within an hour. By the time Randy was ready for discharge, I had not received my call. I asked Molly's permission to call them that night to check on Randy. When I called Molly, I explained to her I had a little surprise. "Molly," I started, "You both need to be at the magic Kingdom on the 12th and report to City Hall by 9:30 a.m. for a private meeting with Randy's favorite dwarf, Dopey."

All I heard was silence on the other end of the phone. My heart was sinking fast, but then I heard her start to sob and then "Oh my gosh" repeated several times. Molly decided to not tell Randy about the surprise until they got to the Magic Kingdom. That night, I cried in my husband's arms, thankful for the time we have had together.

Time passed and I wondered how their trip went. On September 23, I found a fat envelope in my mailbox, which contained a beautiful homemade thank you note and several photos of a smiling Randy (sitting in a wheelchair) with Dopey. Molly wrote how happy Randy was, and had commented, "That nurse Diana who loves Disney arranged this, didn't she?"

I retrieved the message off my answering phone the next day, ironically my daughter's birthday. A tearful Molly called me to let me know Randy had passed quietly that morning. In her grief, she thanked me again for "making that trip so special for him. It was all Randy had talked about."

In the times since 2002 I have gone to Disney World, I always think of Randy (who I only knew for a few short hours) and send a smile towards the sky. Every September 24, I wonder how his young widow is doing. I am amazed at how one simple act made someone so happy, and how much two people, in such a short period of time could touch me so deeply, and teach me so much. I hope I can display the same courage Randy and Molly did, if ever faced with their situation.

My favorite song from "The King and I" is "Getting To Know You" and there are two lines I would like to share:

"It's a very ancient saying,
But a true and honest thought,
If you become a teacher,
By your pupils you'll be taught."

I believe one can substitute "Nurse" for "teacher", and "patients" for "pupils" (please forgive me Messrs. Rogers and Hammerstein!)

Thank you, Randy and Molly, for teaching me.

Future Events

- ❖ **May 16-21, 2008- SGNA's 35th Annual Course. SGNA & YOU. The Power to Make a Difference.** Salt Lake City, Utah.
- ❖ **June 7, 2008- Delmarva Multi-Regional Planning Committee meeting-**Inova Hospital-Alexandria, Va. 10am. Contact Melinda Huffman or Karen bell if you are interested in becoming a member of this committee. Delaware will host next year (2009).
- ❖ **June 9, 2008- Delaware SGNA Meeting-7pm-**Nanticoke Memorial Hospital Cancer Care Center and Christiana Care Education Center- Room 14.
- ❖ **September 8, 2008- Delaware SGNA Meeting-7pm-**Nanticoke Memorial Hospital Cancer Care Center and Christiana Care Education Center- Room 14.
- ❖ **November 8, 2008- Delaware SGNA Fall Education Day-**Dover Downs Convention Center. 8am-5pm. Speakers to be announced.
- ❖ **November 10, 2008- Delaware SGNA Meeting-7pm-**Nanticoke Memorial Hospital Cancer Care Center and Christiana Care Education Center- Room 14.
Elections for the next 2-year term will be completed.

