

HELPING Those at HOME



Grant County Cancer Coalition Raises Funds for Local Folks Who are Battling Cancer

Linda Hahn lost her mother to cancer. Over the years, the Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative member also watched as the cancer that runs rampant in her husband's family took its toll on many beloved relatives. Motivated by these experiences, she became involved with Lancaster's Relay for Life organization.

Nancy Jerrett, retired employee of SREC, lost her best friend to cancer. She, too, threw herself into the Relay for Life organization, working on the group's organizing committee alongside Linda.

Both women worked tirelessly for many years — 9 for Linda and 8 for Nancy — finding meaning and fulfillment from the annual event that raises money for cancer research and education through the American Cancer Society. They're still working today, only now

they've been able to satisfy the one nagging concern they had about the Relay for Life event.

"We wanted to be able to keep some of the funds we raised locally so we could help our friends and neighbors, and we couldn't do that with the American Cancer Society," Linda explained.

With that desire, members of the former Relay for Life Committee formed the Grant County Cancer Coalition, a nonprofit organization created to provide financial assistance to cancer patients and their families in Grant County. The coalition was formed in January 2007 and received its non-profit status from the IRS at the end of the summer. It's overseen by a nine-member board of directors, with Linda serving as president and Nancy as vice president. The coalition's first fund-raising event — an auction and luminary ceremony — was held in conjunction with the Lancaster Harvest Festival in October.

Pictured above: Nancy Jerrett, left, and Linda Hahn look over contributions to be auctioned off at the Grant County Cancer Coalition's first fund-raising event.

“What we do is provide help with all of the extra expenses people have when they go through this experience,” Nancy explained. “For example, if you have cancer you usually have to travel to Dubuque or Madison regularly for treatment and you might have extra fuel costs. We can help with needs like that.”

Creating a Coalition

Forming a nonprofit organization is, the committee discovered, a complex process. To guide them, committee members turned to a similar organization in Richland Center that was set up three years ago for the same purpose the Grant County Cancer Coalition was formed — to keep money raised at events like Relay for Life in the community. Founders of the Richland Center organization helped guide the Grant County group through all aspects of the coalition’s development, from creating application forms to navigating the IRS procedures for obtaining nonprofit status, a process that takes several months.

It takes quite a bit of money, too. To achieve non-profit status, the Richland Center organization had to pay a fee of

\$500, something the budding Grant County Cancer Coalition simply didn’t have.

“We are a bare-bones operation with no frills — we’re completely volunteer,” Linda pointed out. She noted that another reason behind forming the coalition in the first place was to control costs and funnel more money to cancer patients instead of to administrative expenses.

Having to raise \$500 before the coalition could even begin work was discouraging enough for the committee, but the group was soon hit with even more daunting news — the IRS had raised its application fees. It would now cost \$750 to achieve nonprofit status.

Memorial Gift

Just when it seemed that launching the coalition would be a steep uphill climb, the organizing committee received a memorial gift that lifted the group right up both in operation and in spirit.

Last spring a young woman who had dedicated a great deal of time and effort to the Relay for Life event passed away. Linda spoke with the young woman’s

mother on a Saturday. During that conversation, Linda mentioned the cancer coalition, and the mother responded that she wanted to give some of her daughter’s memorial money to the organization to help get it started. They spoke in very general terms; no specific dollar amount was mentioned.

The following Monday, the committee learned with dismay that it would have to raise \$750 instead of \$500. The very next day, Linda received a check for \$750 in the mail from the young woman’s mother.

“We started this organization in her memory,” Linda said. “She had worked so hard for the Relay for Life.” The cancer coalition will now work hard for her.

Applying for Funds

Funding from the Grant County Cancer Coalition is available to anyone living in Grant County who has

cancer. Family members or friends may apply on behalf of another person; the only requirement is that the application must be accompanied by a signed affidavit from a doctor verifying that the applicant does,

in fact, have cancer. There are no income limits because, as Linda and Nancy point out, if a person is going through cancer, he or she will have additional, unexpected financial needs, regardless of the household income.

Completed applications go to a coalition board member who is also a county nurse. The application is then assigned a case number, and the nine-member board considers the request according to case number only; the applicant’s name remains anonymous.

Applicants state their needs, such as help paying utility bills or buying groceries, and the board meets those needs with vouchers. For example, if a family needs help paying for fuel to transport someone back and forth to Madison for chemotherapy, the coalition might give the family vouchers for a particular gas station.

Linda said the coalition will be placing a yearly limit on what an individual can receive, and the group hopes to eventually donate some money each year to research and education as well.

Linda also said that the coalition hopes to eventually raise enough money to contribute to the community,

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Keep the Heat Inside Your Home this Winter

Homeowners across America are struggling to meet the increasing cost of heating their homes. The best way to lower your energy consumption is to improve the efficiency of your home so you don't consume as much energy in the first place. Here are some ways to make your home more energy efficient this winter:

- **Holes around pipes:** Where pipes pass through the ceilings, walls, or floors, the hole is often much larger than the pipe, allowing air to flow through. Check all the pipes in your home, including those servicing your sink, bathtub, water heater, and washing machine. Fill gaps around these pipes with insulation, and then seal with caulking or a wall patch.
- **Poorly fitted heat registers:** There are often gaps between the edge of the register and the wall or floor it's mounted on, allowing major drafts. These gaps can often be sealed easily with caulking.
- **Gaps around flues and vents:** Fireplace flues and kitchen and dryer vents are often poorly sealed where they pass through walls and ceilings. You can fix these



leaks with heat-resistant caulking and metal collar plates available at any hardware store, but be sure not to use any combustible materials. If you're not sure how to do this, call a licensed contractor.

- **Light switches and outlets:** Sealing the space behind your light switches and outlet plates with a foam gasket will prevent air from coming through the wall space. This should be done even on interior walls.
- **Cracks around doors:** Many doorways have large gaps along the frame and threshold, letting in lots of outdoor air. You can solve this by installing or replacing weatherstripping around the door and along the threshold. If the gap at the bottom of the door is large, you may also want to replace your threshold with a door shoe gasket.
- **Heat loss around windows:** If your wooden windows aren't tightly sealed, apply glazing compound where the glass meets the frame and seal where the frame meets the house. If you have aluminum windows, you may need to replace the weatherstripping. ■

Grant County Cancer Coalition

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perhaps by donating to area hospitals to help them expand their oncology services.

Future Plans

Linda and Nancy said the coalition board members hope that eventually groups of volunteers from each community within the county will form their own fund-raising committees and put on their own events. This would help the coalition reach into all areas of Grant County, in terms of both applicants and contributions.

"The more people we can get to help, the better it will be for everyone all around," Linda pointed out.

Although the coalition took the most successful parts of past Relay for Life events — the live auction

and the luminary service — for its first fund-raising activity in October, the board plans to eventually launch other activities and hopes individual communities will come up with their own ideas.

For example, Linda said some members have suggested golf outings, dinner dances, and wine-and-cheese parties. Another idea Linda suggested is establishing a memory garden in each community, where participants could make a contribution for a plant in a loved one's memory.

Anyone interested in learning more or in helping the coalition may contact Linda at 723-7418 or Nancy at 723-4036, or send for information at GCCC, P.O. Box 105, Lancaster, WI 53813. Applications for funds will soon be made available at the clinics and hospitals in the county. Anyone interested in applying could also contact a board member for more information.—*Mary Erickson* ■

Light Up with LEDs This Holiday Season

The 220,000-plus members of Scenic Rivers Energy and the other cooperatives served by Dairyland Power Cooperative add 40 to 60 megawatts of load each year for holiday lighting. This can create extra concern during peak-use hours on cold winter evenings.

However, that doesn't mean you have to dim your yuletide spirit in order to hold down usage during peak hours and save on energy costs. There is a practical, energy-efficient option to consider when purchasing holiday lights. If you're planning your outdoor holiday display, consider replacing your old light strings with light emitting diode (LED) lights, which significantly reduce energy use, are safer, and allow for more convenient bulb replacement.

There are a variety of advantages to using LED lighting technology compared to standard incandescent lights. LED lights are:

- **More energy efficient.** LED holiday lights use up to 93 percent less energy than standard mini lights and

up to 99 percent less energy than standard C-7 holiday lights.

- **Longer lasting.** LED lights can last up to 200,000 hours when used indoors, and some manufacturers also provide a five-year warranty.
- **More convenient.** LED holiday lights are available in 35- to 100-bulb strings in a variety of colors. If a bulb burns out, the other bulbs will stay lit so bad bulbs can easily be replaced.
- **Safer.** LED lights produce almost no heat and don't have the same components that cause traditional lights to burn out or combust. That means less fire hazard to worry about.
- **Sturdier.** These bulbs won't break. In fact, the casing for the diode is solid plastic so it's almost impossible to break.

Remember, LED light strings may cost a bit more to purchase than a standard string of incandescent holiday lights, but like other energy-efficient products, LEDs will pay for themselves in energy savings. So don't hold back on your holiday spirit — just spread it wisely! ■

'Tis the season to save.



\$3

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Holiday lights that use
light emitting diode (LED)
technology:

- Use approximately 90% less energy than standard incandescent holiday lights
- Feature up to 20-year life
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