

Cancer Society honors five with Hope Award

By Mike Blackerby
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Hope has been Bonnie Hufford's resonant theme since she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a rare and deadly form of cancer that attacks the blood and bones. Doctors told Hufford in 2009 that her cancer was already in Stage 3, with 3 being the worst. With few drugs available at the time to treat her cancer, Hufford was given a life expectancy of just two to three years. But hope prevailed as Hufford beat the odds. Today, Hufford, a day after celebrating her 60th birthday and almost five years since receiving her grim prognosis, is being honored by the Knoxville office of the American Cancer Society as one of five inaugural area recipients of the Hope Award.

The luncheon at the Grande Event Center on Clinton Highway will fete Hope Award winners who are involved in various aspects of Cancer Society work, from fundraising and patient support to research and advocacy. Nominations were taken from Cancer Society volunteer leaders in the Knoxville area, and award winners were selected by volunteers from throughout Tennessee.

Hufford, an instructor of journalism and public relations at the University of Tennessee's College of Communication & Information, is receiving the Mary Lasker Award. Lasker was a pioneer health activist and philanthropist who spearheaded fundraising efforts by the ACS.

Hufford is a past winner of the ACS "Volunteer of the Year" award in the state, and has been UT faculty adviser for the Cancer Society's campus Relay for Life teams for a decade. Under Hufford, UT's Relay for Life program has raised \$630,000. "Bonnie has been an outstanding volunteer for our organization in multiple capacities," said Scotty Evans, senior representative for community engagement for the Cancer Society. "She is a great all-around volunteer, from her support of the UT Relay For Life to sharing her testimony with others." Hufford, who recently received great news that her cancer is in remission because of treatment from ground-breaking drugs, said she feels a duty to give back to the cancer community that has supported her.

"This award means so much to me because it is coming from the American Cancer Society," said Hufford. "This isn't a journey anybody can do alone. If you don't have friends and family behind you, I don't know how you can make it."

Other Hope Award winners are Bronzie Harris, Outstanding Community Outreach; Janine Bateson, Outstanding Community Research Development; Janine Mingie, Outstanding Health Care Professional; and Provision CARES Foundation, Outstanding Corporate Leadership.