

# Glendale resident receives Hon Kachina volunteer award

## Founder of Arizona Myeloma Network

When Jack Kavanagh was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer of the bone marrow plasma cells, his wife, Barbara Kavanagh, went in search of information and treatment.

To her surprise, there was little support for patients with this disease. After years of frustration struggling to obtain treatment information options for her family, she decided to create the Arizona Myeloma Network (AzMN) to make sure others with this type of cancer would not have to struggle as she and her husband had.

AzMN provides education, awareness and advocacy for multiple myeloma patients and their families. For the development of this non-profit and her years of commitment to volunteering, Kavanagh has been chosen as a recipient of the 2009 Hon Kachina Volunteer Award.

Starting her own non-profit wasn't new to Kavanagh. In the earlier years, her husband's work demanded a tremendous amount of relocating, and she found herself living in two states and five countries over a 10-year period. As a way of meeting people and finding resources for

her husband in each community, she either joined an existing volunteer program or started one. These include fundraising for the Sargent Cancer Care for Children in London and a program to train Turkish nurses to work with parents of children with cancer at the Ankara Children's Cancer Unit. For the past 17 years, she has been a fulltime caregiver to her husband while continuing to help others. Volunteering has given her enough experience to author three handbooks on volunteerism.

Today, she serves on many committees and boards, but as founder and president of AzMN, she puts much of her energy into promoting its mission of bringing together scientists, businesses, cancer specialists and healthcare providers to develop new research and improve the quality of life for cancer patients. In 2008, because of an increased demand for similar cancer education programs and services, especially among Native Americans, AzMN expanded its focus to other forms of the disease, including breast cancer. AzMN received grants from the Komen Foundation



Barbara Kavanagh

and the Arizona Department of Health Services Cancer Control Program this year to implement the "women to women" breast

cancer education program to train Navajo women to help one another. A Cancer Awareness and Advocacy conference was held on the reservation in July to educate on cancer with a special focus on breast cancer.

Kavanagh jokingly describes herself as a gerbil on a little wheel running as fast as she can.

She said, "Even though volunteering seems to monopolize my life, I get so much back."

The Hon Kachina Volunteer Awards is celebrating its 33rd year of recognizing outstanding volunteer service and increasing public awareness on the

importance of volunteering. More than 360 people have been recognized throughout Arizona for their volunteer service. This year, nine recipients have been chosen to receive this prestigious award.

The Hon Kachina Council will present the Hon Kachina Awards at a black-tie optional dinner Sept. 26 at the Camelback Inn-A JW Resort & Spa. A reception will be held at 6:30 p.m. with dinner and awards presentation at 7:30 p.m. To support Kavanagh, tickets may be purchased by contacting Pam Betz at 480-905-1578, or betzco@cox.net.