

2022 Scottsdale: Spirit of Hope Award

Barbara Kavanagh

Awareness, Education and Advocacy.



The Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation is delighted to recognize Barbara as the MMRF Spirit of Hope Honoree at the 2022 MMRF Team for Cures: Scottsdale 5K Walk/Run. This award is presented at every 5K Walk/Run to a patient, caregiver, or family who inspires hope through their resilience, perseverance, and dedication to the MMRF and its mission.

As the Founder and CEO of the Arizona Myeloma Network (AzMN®), Barbara Kavanagh is no stranger to the Arizona myeloma community. Barbara's husband Jack was diagnosed with myeloma in 1991, a month before their wedding. Little was known about this cancer at the time and the news left the couple feeling frightened and overwhelmed. In 2004, Jack's hematologist, Craig Reeder, suggested they talk to Rafael Fonseca, the new Director of the Myeloma Department at Mayo Clinic Cancer Center. After a three-hour conversation over coffee at a local bookstore, Barbara agreed to plan the first Myeloma Symposium which was 'led' by Fonseca and Jeff Trent, CEO of TGen, a leading research institution. It was a great success! Riding on the heels of this success, Barbara created her own 501c3. "Jack inspired me to start my nonprofit." Barbara shared. "Because of him, I knew I had to do more to help other myeloma patients and families learn all they can about their disease and increase their chances of a better quality of life. Jack is my greatest personal and professional inspiration."

Barbara was introduced to the MMRF when, Kathy Giusti traveled to Mayo for a 'research' meeting. Through shared connections, Jack and Barbara were invited to attend. The couple sat in the back of the room, feeling out of place amongst top scientists in the field. After the meeting, Barbara and Jack approached Kathy and fondly remember being greeted with great kindness.

Continuing her research on the MMRF, Barbara got in touch with the MMRF's Director of Medical Communications and Education, Mary DeRome. Barbara invited her to participate in the AzMN's Myeloma Conferences and in 2018, they collaborated on the first joint Myeloma Symposium.

Barbara recognizes that there have been many challenges but knowing the resources and having the love and support of family and friends has helped her and Jack. Barbara sees these 'walks' as an extension of this support. Barbara expressed that she "loves the idea of bringing myeloma patients, caregivers, friends and families together while creating more awareness and raising funds for research."

Barbara's inspiration has come from Jack's courage and his longtime survival but as he always says: "I couldn't have done it without you, my wife and caregiver, by my side." Out of their own experience, Barbara began the Cancer Caregivers Education Program, CCEP® for All cancer patients and families. Since COVID, Barbara and her staff are working on a Virtual CCEP so that no one has to battle cancer alone. She hopes that others will continue their legacy and continue to bring the best cancer research, care and resources to anyone who is dealing with this devastating disease. Barbara's mission since day one, was *Awareness, Education and Advocacy* with a special consideration for the underserved.





For the past 31 years, Barbara has devoted her life and career not only to Jack but to thousands of myeloma patients and their families in the community. “I have received other Awards, but this one is the most meaningful.” Barbara said. “It is so important that the caregiver also receive the knowledge and guidance they need to make well-informed decisions, And, that is why we are developing the first Virtual Cancer Caregivers Education Program, VCCEP® for All cancer patients, caregivers, families, and healthcare providers.” “No one should have to battle Cancer Alone!”

Barbara has touched the myeloma community with her strength of character, her incredible kindness, and her embodiment of Hope. The MMRF recognizes that caregivers play a vital role in helping multiple myeloma patients manage their disease and navigate treatment options and we are proud to honor Barbara as the 2022 recipient of the MMRF Arizona Spirit of Hope award.