

10 Ways to Give Back to the Cancer Community

Help others during their cancer diagnosis, treatment and beyond.

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If you or a family member has gone through cancer treatment, you may have thought about how your experience with cancer could help others. Perhaps your journey was so profound that you feel a need to share it or to help make someone else's cancer journey easier.

Here are 10 meaningful and rewarding ways to give back to the community and help others during their cancer diagnosis, treatment and beyond.

Volunteer at a Cancer Center

Call the volunteer coordinator at your local cancer center or hospital to see how you can help. The time commitment is often flexible.

Linda Baker is a volunteer at her local cancer center, a job she does in honor of her late husband, Ernest "Ernie" Baker. She never imagined setting foot in the cancer center, much less spending her free time there. But in 2010, at age 58, Ernie was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, an often-incurable blood cancer.

Linda remembers that she and Ernie were the recipients of volunteer help at three different cancer centers during his treatment. Volunteers would offer snacks, drinks, warm blankets and friendly conversation. They brought in therapy dogs. They played guitar and harp music for relaxation. Now as a volunteer carrying out these tasks herself, Linda says, "I treasure the times I can offer a long hug, a listening ear or encouraging words to someone going through a hard time."

Organize a Fundraiser

Contact your local religious institution, school, hospital or community group to organize a fundraiser for a cancer-related cause. It could be for an individual, a treatment center or a cancer nonprofit organization, and fundraising can be done in-person or online. People can donate and the funds can directly help people during their cancer journey.

Linda recalls that Ernie was “let go” from his job just after his diagnosis. “We had a cancer diagnosis, house and car payments, and no source of income. We were involved with two churches that came together to raise funds for us. It was the scariest and most devastating week of our married life. Their kindness was overwhelming.”

While Ernie was in the hospital, Linda’s friends figured out how to organize a fundraiser. They held an event called “Standing in the Gap for Ernie Baker.” They planned a barbeque dinner and silent auction and raised \$52,000, which allowed the Bakers to keep their home and have a vehicle. By organizing a fundraiser, you can make a difference in the lives of people in your community, too.

Join a Support Group

When affected by cancer, you have much to offer to a support group by sharing your experiences with others who may be in various stages of their cancer journey. Join a support group at your local cancer center or a virtual support group online and share your wisdom and insights to help others.

The Bakers were members of a support group for myeloma patients and their caregivers. Linda found that meeting others going through the same challenges was extremely helpful. The group attended seminars together and formed a team for the “Light the Night” walk in support of myeloma patients.

Make a Donation

Donate funds that go toward support, cancer research or other worthy endeavors such as Reel Recovery, a free fly-fishing retreat for cancer survivors that encourages healing with the help of nature. Other organizations can help with basic needs like housing, transportation and living away from home while having cancer treatments.

Donations that fund research may go toward developing new therapies. Ernie Baker enrolled in a clinical trial during his battle with myeloma. Without it, he had run out of standard treatments. Consider [donating to AICR](#) to advance cancer research and to provide valuable cancer resources to the public. The contributions from our supporters have helped us show that 40 percent of cancers can be prevented with lifestyle improvements. With your additional support, we can do innovative research that will help people live longer, healthier lives. We won’t stop until we live in a world where no one develops a preventable cancer.

How Can I Support People With Cancer?

In addition to the ideas above, you can also give back by:

- Signing up to be a member of TeamAICR on our website, and racing in support of cancer.

- Making “goody bags” to bring to a local cancer center. Fill them with personal care items like lip balm, hand sanitizer and lotion or fun items like hard candies, books or an encouraging note.
- Starting a sign-up list to rotate bringing meals to someone battling cancer. You can use a free app like MealTrain to make coordination easy.
- It allows people to sign up to bring meals on specific dates, and even lists favorite meals and preferences.
- Offering a caregiver a break while you stay with their loved one for a few hours.
- Providing gift cards to cover gas costs for those who cannot drive themselves and need a ride to treatment.
- Organizing musicians from a religious institution or school to sing or play for patients during treatment to elevate their spirits.

After nine years of treatment, Linda Baker’s beloved husband, Ernie, lost his battle with myeloma. Not long after, Linda decided to become a volunteer at the cancer center where Ernie had his treatment. Upon her return, she was welcomed back with open arms, hugs and love.

Linda says: “I always knew I wanted to give back for the kindness we received over the years. Service is important to me. The choice was clear after the experience I had with the comfort volunteers brought to us. Volunteering has allowed me to feel useful and appreciated as I navigate a new normal. Helping others is healing me.”

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