

Limitless Possibilities

by Cathy DeRoy | *President, The Magnolia Council*



In one sense, it's hard to believe that this marks the start of the 10th Anniversary year since the inception of The Magnolia Council. It seems like just yesterday that Council founder, Nancy Mishkin's concept of a women's auxiliary fundraising group came into being. But a review of how we have matured as an organization and all that we have accomplished in that period makes it real.

At the Spirit of Hope Luncheon in 2010, we announced the formation of the Council. What had previously consisted of seven dedicated women, and a cookbook, became an original membership of 33 women with a focus on increasing awareness of Tower Cancer Research Foundation through public outreach and events. In the ensuing years, the Council has become a recognized presence in the community, having raised over \$2.5 million for cancer research grants and patient support programs. While we have welcomed many new members, it is noteworthy that 19 of those original Council members remain members today. These are committed volunteers!

For this, our 10th Anniversary year, I consulted with Nancy to get a sense of how the Council originated. According to Nancy, in 2009, she and six other women compiled their family recipes into what became *Eats*, the Tower cookbook, as a marketing tool for Tower. At the same time, appreciative women were constantly asking for a way to give back to Tower. She realized there was an opportunity to take what had begun with the "cookbook ladies" and channel all that goodwill into meaningful support for Tower. Named for the magnolia trees Nancy loved from time spent in Georgia, the Magnolia Council was born.

Magnolia House was a dream of Nancy's from the outset. For years prior to the formal launch of Magnolia House in 2013, Tower offered limited psychosocial programs (mainly yoga classes). But it couldn't encompass all the elements Nancy envisioned until there was a physical location, a dedicated space for it. That only happened when Tower moved to its beautiful new offices in 2016.

Our two honorees for this year's Spirit of Hope Luncheon uniquely personify the Council's concentration on the dual areas of cancer research and patient support. Dr. Beth Karlan is (among other professional roles) Professor and Vice Chair of Women's Health Research in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, and her research focuses on ovarian and other women's cancers, as well as inherited cancer susceptibility. Dr. Arash Asher is a renowned expert in cancer survivorship and rehabilitation, leading the development of a number of unique cancer survivorship programs.

We are continuing to fulfill our commitment to fund a \$500,000 Senior

"The energy and dedication of the Council's members, and the donations from believers like you, make the possibilities for the future limitless."

Investigator Grant in the field of targeted therapies, and continuing to raise funds to sustain Magnolia House. Through Magnolia House funding, we lend support to certain cancer survivorship programs headed by Dr. Asher, including his unique 6-week educational support program, G.R.A.C.E. (Growing Resiliency And CourageE with cancer). This year, we have also committed to donate a portion of our 2019 Luncheon proceeds to the creation of a ground-breaking biorepository for cancer tissues that will be made available for approved research at UCLA and with outside collaborators (a project headed by Dr. Karlan).

I'm so proud to be a founding member and current president of this incredible Magnolia Council. Under the skilled vision and leadership of Nancy, and our Chair, Shelley Warsavsky, and past president, Beth Goren (both of whom have also been there from the cookbook days), we have developed into a strong and creative contributor to the battle against cancer and the improvement of patient quality of life, and we are determined to make a difference. The energy and dedication of the Council's members, and donations from believers like you, make the possibilities for the future limitless.

