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Cancer Support Community to bring holistic healing to Lafayette

By Pippa Fisher



CEO Jim Bouquin (left) with Chief Development Officer Peter Dudley stand among the heritage oaks on the hillside that will become a natural retreat behind the proposed Cancer Support Community building. Photo Pippa Fisher

underway to purchase the land for \$5 million, the owners, Macedo's nephew and his wife, Ray and Angelina Leal, decided this past fall to gift the land to CSC instead.

Furthermore the fundraising campaign for the roughly \$12 million project is off to a strong start with a generous \$2 million donation from local philanthropists Myrna and Dennis Cheney, for whom the building will be named.

Founded originally in the East Bay as the Wellness Community in 1990, the CSC, as it is now known serves 2,000 people each year, including those going through active cancer treatment, and survivors as well as family members. CSC provides psychosocial care - a holistic approach promoting health and healing in mind, body and soul alongside medical treatment. All services are provided free.

The Lafayette facility will be a state-of-the-art building: a model for cancer centers throughout the nation, offering educational programs, a children and teen activity center, counseling rooms, a social center, a movement studio offering specialized programs including yoga and mindfulness. There will be a demonstration kitchen with oncology dietitians teaching patients and caregivers how to prepare cancer-fighting foods, much of which will be grown on the property in an organic garden located on the premises.

Plans currently show the land will be less than 30 percent developed. Bouquin explains that in addition to creating a beautiful, natural retreat and garden on the hills above the building, they are working with experts to ensure all plantings are native and that they treat the grounds reverentially, cherishing and propagating the land that is healing them. They will be offering weekend classes, engaging the broader community on growing healing food.

CSC is trying to interact as much as possible with the community. "We are working with the city and the community through study sessions," Bouquin says. Using local developers Branagh, they hope to start the planning process with the city early this year.

Bouquin, who has been 13 years in his current role, having attended CSC as a caregiver for his wife (now a cancer survivor) three years before that, is clearly excited to see this become a reality. "Although our instructors and therapists are among the best in the country, the true magic of Cancer Support Community lies in the deep and profound connections our members make with each other," he explains.

"Every one of our programs is structured to foster these connections, from our creative arts classes to our group therapy - our members can feel heard, understood, and intimately connected because they are among others who are facing the exact same fears, uncertainties, questions, and even treatments and their side effects. It's the healing power of these connections that puts people in the best state of mind and body to achieve their best possible medical outcomes, and their most complete quality of life."

Statistics bear this out. Ohio State University's long-term Stress and Immunity Breast Cancer Project shows that patients receiving the type of comprehensive psychosocial support provided by CSC were 56 percent

CEO Jim Bouquin knew as soon as he set eyes on the 5.75-acre parcel of land adjacent to the Lafayette Reservoir that this would be the perfect location for the new Cancer Support Community building and grounds.

Now Bouquin's vision is drawing closer.

Bouquin had searched long and hard to find a property that could meet the needs of the nonprofit CSC, which has been operating out of its current Walnut Creek location for the past 28 years and has outgrown it. In contrast with the residential neighborhood of the existing center, the company was looking for an area of natural beauty with space for community gardens and trails combined with accessibility. Bouquin says that he hadn't found anything that was anywhere near as perfect as this location.

The land, once part of a larger dairy farm owned by Gus Macedo, was sold for what became the Lafayette Reservoir, apart from the almost-six acre parcel that remained in the family. Although negotiations were

less likely to die and 45 percent less likely to have a recurrence. Of those who did have a recurrence, 59 percent were more likely to survive. The study showed reduced anxiety, improved immune response and physical functioning.

And with the American Cancer Society's statistic that men have a one in two risk of developing cancer in their lifetime and women a one in three chance, there is a strong probability that everyone in the community will be touched by cancer, either themselves or through their loved ones.

The CSC is offering several tour dates for members of the public planned for April 13, June 8, Aug. 10 and Oct. 12.

Info: <http://cancersupport.net/>

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