

AHN CANCER INSTITUTE OPENS
GLIMMER *of* HOPE
 METASTATIC BREAST CANCER CENTER

By Diana Napper, Founder of A Glimmer of Hope Foundation

The thing with metastatic cancer is there's not a lot of hope.

I learned this from my friend Carol Jo Weiss Friedman, who I met when I moved to New York City from Pittsburgh decades ago. I struggled to make it in a city where the traffic moves fast and the people even faster. But, Carol Jo was quintessential "New York" yet friendly and welcoming, too. She helped me navigate my new surroundings. We were best friends.

After we celebrated the birth of my son, Carol Jo was diagnosed with breast cancer. And within a year, she was gone. Given the quick progression from her diagnosis to her death, I believe Carol Jo had metastatic breast cancer.

Before she passed in 1990, I promised her I'd pursue my dream of opening a jewelry business that would fund a hospice in Carol Jo's name. Over the years, that dream grew and grew; I knew I wanted to create a venue to support breast cancer patients and their loved ones.

That dream became A Glimmer of Hope Foundation, which has raised more than \$6 million for breast cancer efforts and helped open the Glimmer of Hope Metastatic Breast Cancer Center at the Allegheny Health Network (AHN) Cancer Institute at AHN Allegheny General. The Center is devoted to late-stage breast cancer patients and was brought to life with gifts from the William F. and Lynn D. Gauss Foundation and other key donors.

If caught early, breast cancer is curable, but about 30 percent of early-stage breast cancers eventually develop stage IV metastatic cancer.

This aggressive disease means the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. Most women do not survive. **According to the American Cancer Society, the five-year survival rate after diagnosis is just 22 percent.**

The Center offers comprehensive, centralized care, including clinical trial options and integrative medicine to improve quality of life. It's the first center of its kind in our region.

What I love most about the Center is everything happens in one visit. The Center allows the patient to meet with all physicians she needs in one place.

"Our patients are mothers, wives, friends, co-workers, and employers," says Christie Hilton, DO, director of the Center and medical oncology lead of the Breast Cancer Leadership team at the AHN Cancer Institute. "They deserve to live their lives as normally as possible. By centralizing all her needs into one visit, we hope to alleviate some of the stress and quickly get her back to living her life."

There are also relaxing services like acupuncture and massage to help with the side effects of treatment and relieve fatigue, nausea, and more. One patient said with these services, it was the first time she felt back to "normal" since her diagnosis.



