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Cancer Care Services welcomes new CEO and president

Melanie S. Wilson to join Cancer Care Services as new chief

Fort Worth, TX - July xx, 2010 - Cancer Care Services is pleased to announce it has hired Melanie S. Wilson to serve in the newly created position of president and CEO. Wilson brings to Cancer Care Services more than two decades of leadership experience in the greater Fort Worth nonprofit community.

Wilson herself is a cancer survivor, as is her 19-year-old daughter, Lauren, and husband, Dana. All three are now healthy, but the wrenching experience is what gave Wilson a reason to consider the CEO opportunity at Cancer Care Services even though she was not seeking a new position. Wilson was previously the executive director of the American Heart Association's Tarrant Division, where she received a national award as Top Executive Director and a regional award as Manager of the Year.

"This amazing opportunity at Cancer Care Services found *me*," Wilson said, speaking by phone on her first day in her new job. "The position was not only intriguing to my mind, but it was also intriguing to my heart. It is rare to have the privilege of being fully engaged in one's work life, so serving as the staff leader of this extraordinary organization feels like more like a *calling* than a job."

Wilson's leadership comes at a critically important time, according to Paula Fultz, outgoing interim executive director and former board president. "The board and staff believe Melanie is the right person to take us to the next level of organizational growth, and this is urgently needed because of the growing incidences of cancer in the region," Fultz said.

The cancer rate has grown 20 percent in Tarrant County, a faster growth rate than for Texas and the U.S. This is due to a rapid population increase, an aging population, and improved methods of diagnosis. The number of new occurrences has also increased by 15 percent over the past five years in Tarrant, Hood and Parker counties. The economic downturn has also made matters much worse for many cancer patients who have lost their jobs, and the organization has seen a dramatic increase in requests for services.

"The time is right for Cancer Care Services to elevate the position of our leader and board as we confront head-on the challenges our community faces with cancer and its impact on patients and their families," said Bill Bledsoe, board chairman. "We have not only created the position of president/CEO, but we have also renewed our focus on strategic planning, governance and community partnerships."

Located in Fort Worth's hospital district, Cancer Care Services provides financial, emotional and spiritual services to people with cancer and their loved ones and caregivers in Tarrant, Parker and Hood counties. "No one should make the journey alone" is its motto. The nonprofit organization helped 2,800 patients and 900 family members and caregivers in 2009. This is a fraction of the need. More than 7,000 people are diagnosed with cancer each year in Tarrant, Parker and Hood counties.

Cancer Care Services calls its eight full-time social workers "cancer navigators." They, other staff, and a host of volunteers help cancer patients and their loved ones through the frightening experience, from cancer diagnosis through the entire journey. Financial assistance on a sliding scale helps with prescription drugs, dentistry, respite care, medical supplies and even health insurance for patients living at or below the federal poverty level.

Emotional, social and spiritual services are also available to any cancer patient, family and caregiver at all levels of the socioeconomic ladder. Yoga, art therapy, a children's camp, guided meditation, Bible study, support groups and educational seminars are offered to help ease the anxiety and fear that are so common to dealing with cancer.

Cancer Care Services' mission is to provide HELP and HOPE to cancer patients and survivors and their families and caregivers through direct financial, emotional, spiritual and social programs, services and activities. It is located at 623 S. Henderson Street in Fort Worth. For more information, contact 817-921-0653 or visit www.cancercareservices.org.

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