Supporting Cancer Survivors

June 1st is National Cancer Survivors Day. While surviving cancer is certainly something to celebrate, serious illness affects people long after treatment. For cancer survivors, long-term concerns include:

✦ Being diagnosed with other cancers, suffering additional health problems.
✦ Financial stress caused by the cost of treatment or time off work.
✦ Strained relationships with family and friends.

Family members of survivors, particularly those who served as caretakers, may also be struggling in the aftermath of a loved one’s cancer diagnosis and treatment.

While many individuals and faith communities actively help others in the midst of a critical illness, this support sometimes fades after the illness improves or goes into remission. Yet the need for support is still there and sometimes is even more acute. Here are some ways that you can support a cancer survivor and his or her family:

✦ Pray for them.
✦ Treatment recovery can take time. Offer help with transportation, errands and chores while the survivor gets his or her strength back.
✦ Provide childcare so that adult family members can spend time together.
✦ Make yourself available to listen to a survivor’s or caretaker’s concerns and fears.

_Prayer:  Dear God, help me to remain mindful of the people in my life. Help me to be a strong support for them. Amen._


Men and Cancer

In the United States, we celebrate Father’s Day in June, which is also Men’s Health Awareness Month. For many men and their families, healthy living and wellness is an ongoing concern.

One significant fear is cancer, something that claims hundreds of thousands of lives each year in the United States alone. For men, the most common cancers are those of the prostate, lungs, colon and skin.

Several effective screenings exist, but the American Cancer Society does not recommend that every man undergo routine screening for all of these conditions. Instead, men should have a conversation with their doctors about whether testing is appropriate for them given their age, the state of their health and their family histories.

Early detection improves a man’s chances of survival and may reduce the need for invasive and painful therapies.

However, many men delay speaking to their doctors about symptoms that may point to cancer. Some do this out of fear and some because they believe they should “man-up” and ignore their pain and discomfort.

In addition, some men may not have a relationship with a primary care physician or any health care professional. Even those that do may put off or forgo regular checkups, missing opportunities for health counseling and, if necessary, tests that can detect cancer. Both types of inaction can lead to unnecessary suffering, worsening conditions and even death.

Taking good care of himself is one way a father or grandfather shows his family how much he loves them. Setting an appointment for a long-overdue check-up is the first step – and a lovely gift a father can give on Father’s Day.

Resources: Advocatehealth.com, American Cancer Society: Cancer Facts for Men – cancer.org/healthy/findcancerearly/menshealth/index, Movember (Men’s Health Awareness) – us.movember.com