Dancing to the Beat of Community Cancer Support Community CNJ Meeting Patient Needs through Multicultural Outreach

April is National Minority Health Month. This year’s theme is “Active and Healthy” with a focus on promoting physical activity to help people live healthier lives. Cancer Support Community Central NJ partnered with Saint Peter's University Hospital to host a Latino Family Day of Wellness sponsored by Novartis as part of their Multicultural Outreach initiative.

BEDMINSTER, N.J. (PRWEB) April 29, 2019 -- A Spanish speaking woman is diagnosed with cancer. She lives alone, and has little support, as well as transportation problems; myriad challenges to receiving the care she needs, further complicated by financial issues. She connected with bilingual social worker, Katherine Schaible, LSW, Program Coordinator at Cancer Support Community Central NJ (CSCCNJ) at a community event hosted by CSCCNJ. Through dedicated funds, an Uber brings her to CSCCNJ’s headquarters in Bedminster, NJ where she has a one-on-one session with Schaible. Afterwards, she is relieved and less stressed. She is happy to connect with someone who understands and can help, and enjoys the opportunity to spend time outside of her home for an escape.

When facing a cancer diagnosis, emotional and social interventions are vital in coping with the stress associated with the disease, but not every person, or every culture, sees a cancer diagnosis through the same lens. Last month, in an effort to meet Hispanic-Latino cancer patients and their families where they are, CSCCNJ hosted a Latino Family Day of Wellness in New Brunswick, NJ in partnership with Saint Peter’s University Hospital and sponsored by Novartis. The free event, Día Familiar de Bienestar, was delivered completely in Spanish and held at Saint Peter’s. Healthcare educators and wellness instructors provided nutrition education, mindfulness practice, Yoga, Zumba®, and more for families impacted by a cancer diagnosis.

Looking at the fight against cancer, it can be broken down into three parts of a pyramid. At the very top are organizations such as American Cancer Society conducting research to eradicate the disease. At the next level are hospitals and cancer centers treating the disease. Lastly, the base, and largest portion of the pyramid, is where the community is found. CSCCNJ is there, walking hand in hand with all those impacted by the disease throughout their cancer journey, and fulfilling its mission So That No One Faces Cancer Alone. In order to make this mission a reality, the organization needs to reach multicultural communities in a way that resonates with their beliefs and traditions.

April is National Minority Health Month. This year’s theme is “Active and Healthy” with a focus on promoting physical activity to help people live healthier lives. CSCCNJ understands the importance of gentle activity for cancer patients and the importance of staying active for loved ones tasked with caring for these patients. In addition to health and wellness programming, CSCCNJ provides a variety of social and emotional support, including individual and group counseling; nutrition programs; social connections; decision support and a full array of activities for children, always at no charge, to individuals and families impacted by cancer.

In 2019, CSCCNJ unveiled its Vision for the Future, a strategic plan that includes Multicultural Outreach as one of its five pillars for growth and expansion. The organization plans to work closely with leaders in Hispanic-Latino, South Asian, Caribbean & African-American, LGBTQ, and other communities to bridge the support gap with programs and services tailored to the varied lives, experiences, and beliefs about cancer of...
these diverse populations.

“It is important to meet the unique needs of the community, where they are, not where we are, by letting go of bias and assumption when working with the participants and the solution is not cookie cutter. No one is just a statistic,” says CSCCNJ CEO Amy Sutton.

“An interdisciplinary approach between public health and social work is crucial,” says Schaible. “There are health disparities and subsets within a culture that are identified through research and a literature review and a third component is Child Life. This provides a cohesive approach to meeting the needs of any community.”

In the Hispanic-Latino community, it is common for the entire family to be present for programs and appointments. At the Latino Family Day of Wellness, there were over 30 cancer patients and their loved ones in attendance. Fifteen children were present and spent time in a separate space so they could meet other children impacted by the disease. Jesse Guzik, CCLS, Child/Youth Program Coordinator, provided age and developmentally appropriate activities for the children. During Zumba® and other activities, families were able to dance and come together to spend time not thinking about cancer.

To prepare for this Latino Family Day of Wellness, CSCCNJ conducted an extensive review of healthcare literature regarding the community; it was clear that there were significant barriers to providing effective emotional and social support services. The most notable was the language barrier, because many individuals in this community, even those who are comfortable speaking English, could not properly communicate with their healthcare provider. According to Schaible, communication is “the key in building trust.” Therefore, in order to gain this trust, CSCCNJ needed to be vetted as a valued resource by the patient navigators, oncologists, and other healthcare professionals who serve the needs of the Hispanic-Latino community, as well as civic and cultural leaders from the community. It is also critical that the CSCCNJ staff come from a Hispanic-Latino background to create a sense of community with those they are serving. From there, CSCCNJ conducted “on the ground” assessments through focus groups. These developmental stages were crucial in helping the organization learn what the community’s needs are. “The purpose is not to only provide a Day of Wellness; we want to engage the community by learning what they are asking for and who is asking,” says Schaible. “CSCCNJ is willing to ask these questions and alter its programming and approach to reflect this.”

This method will be integrated into a variety of communities in New Jersey to provide outreach by meeting patients and families where they are. It will be facilitated through providers in the community as CSCCNJ continues to develop new relationships with healthcare providers, community groups, churches, banks and other organizations. All programming will take place in convenient locations in local communities, because in each instance there will be specific barriers to overcome in order to provide vital services to individuals and families facing cancer.

Through hyper-focused efforts in the community, CSCCNJ hopes to create more moments for people to come together as they did at the Latino Family Day of Wellness. Attending a Day of Wellness is not an end for these families impacted by cancer, but rather a beginning for a partnership with CSCCNJ, including regularly scheduled support groups and ongoing health and wellness programming. “It is an amazing sight to see a community breaking down barriers and coming together in something as simple as dance to know they are not alone in their cancer journey,” says Schaible.

She continues, “It was uplifting and overwhelming to see the connections made. 30+ families came together as strangers and left sharing contact information, kissing, hugging, and feeling they deserved this level of support.
We ignited the fire within them for empowerment.”

About Cancer Support Community Central New Jersey: Cancer Support Community Central New Jersey (CSCCNJ) is a registered 501c(3) and an independently licensed affiliate of Cancer Support Community, an international non-profit organization. As experts in oncology mental health, the organization provides support, education, and hope to all people with cancer and their loved ones, so that no one faces cancer alone®. Backed by evidence that the best cancer care includes social and emotional support, CSCCNJ creates a caring community to help individuals live with, through and beyond cancer. At no cost to patients, family members and caregivers, the organization delivers essential programs and services including individual and group support; educational workshops; hands-on nutrition and healthy cooking education; classes to enhance health and wellness; and social activities for the entire family. In 2019, the organization is celebrating 15 years of Community + Compassion. For more information please visit their website at https://cancersupportcnj.org or call (908) 658-5400.
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