

Touchpoints

A newsletter of the Kenneth B. Schwartz Center

*Dedicated to
strengthening the
relationship between
patients and
caregivers*

An evening of celebration!

ON WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 18, 2000, approximately 1,000 supporters and friends of the Schwartz Center gathered for an inspirational evening at the Westin Hotel in Boston to recognize the importance of compassion in today's health care system and to celebrate the work of the center. This year's fifth anniversary dinner was co-chaired by the leaders of two of the most prominent health care systems in New England — Samuel Thier, MD, president and CEO of Partners HealthCare System, and Michael Collins, MD, president and CEO of Caritas Christi Health Care System, along with their wives Paula Thier and Maryellen Collins. As they spoke to a full ballroom of guests, both

men stressed the fundamental importance of promoting the Schwartz Center's mission — to strengthen the relationship between patients and caregivers.

Dr. Thier kicked off the dinner with reflections on the changing health care system. He reminisced about accompanying his father, a physician, on housecalls. "Even though housecalls are no longer a routine part of medical practice, these relationships can — and should — be achieved by taking the time to listen to the patient and giving patients an opportunity to be understood."

Throughout the dinner, it became clear that the Schwartz Center's efforts to improve care for patients often take the form of creating a supportive environment
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Arlo Guthrie, guest performer

— *An evening of celebration!*

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for caregivers. Andrew Dreyfus, chair of the Schwartz Center, recalled the story of an oncology nurse. “In eight years of practice she had never once talked to a fellow worker about how it



felt to lose a patient. That’s why we created the Schwartz Center Rounds,” Dreyfus explained, “monthly forums that allow physicians, nurses, social workers, and other caregivers to talk openly about their deepest concerns — for their patients and for themselves.”



Immediately following his remarks, a video presentation showed caregivers involved in a moving discussion of the case of a stillborn baby, held earlier this year during the Schwartz Center Rounds at Emerson Hospital. The Rounds are currently held at nine hospitals in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, with hospitals as far away as Illinois and Tennessee expressing interest in the program.

After dinner, Dr. Collins spoke of the growing presence of the Schwartz Center in the Massachusetts health care community. “The Kenneth B. Schwartz Center has quickly but powerfully forged a presence in our health care community,” he noted ... “that allows all of us in health care to come together and celebrate, for one special evening, the fundamental calling of our profession: providing the best, most compassionate health care to the patients we serve.” Dr. Collins recalled a chance meeting with Ken Schwartz in 1995 that led to a powerful discussion not only of the risks posed to patient-caregiver bonds by financial pressures on health care, but also of the importance of sustaining “those ... moments of engagement” with his caregivers that elevated and inspired [Ken].”

With the presentation of the second annual Compassionate Caregiver of the Year award, the dinner placed special emphasis upon acknowledging the struggles, determination, and triumphs of caregivers across Massachusetts as well as their patients.



This year’s recipient of the award — which is supported by Lilly Oncology — is Judith Best-Lavigniac, RN, MSN, a nurse practitioner

who cares for the homeless on Cape Cod. Accepting the award along with \$5000, Best-Lavigniac spoke about her belief that compassionate health care means acknowledging the needs and inherent dignity of all patients, not simply those who can afford to pay.

The evening’s finale came in the amusing and heartfelt songs and stories of Arlo Guthrie. Guthrie entertained a rapt audience, and, while playing some of his most well-known songs — including “City of New Orleans” and his father’s “This Land is Your Land” — spoke powerfully about the effects of illness in his own life, specifically his father’s struggle with Huntington’s



Clockwise from upper left:

Bobbi Parker Schmidt (left), Board chair Andrew Dreyfus, and Edie Howe

(From left to right) Kathleen Sheehan, The Beacon Companies; John Keith, Keith Construction; Shelley Hoon, Hoon & Co; and Board member Howard Cohen, The Beacon Companies

Compassionate caregiver awardee Judith Best-Lavigniac, RN, (center) with (left to right) Cassie Carroll, Jeanne Shriber, James Carroll, Michel Lavigniac, Arthur Bickford, MD, and Connie Bickford, MD

Sheridan Kassirer, MD, Partners HealthCare (left), Deeb Salem, MD, New England Medical Center, and Laura Rossi, RN, Brigham & Women’s Hospital

Arlo Guthrie with (left to right) dinner co-chairs Michael Collins, MD, Caritas Christi, Maryellen Collins, Paula Thier and Samuel Thier, MD, Partners HealthCare

Potential future Board members: Ben Schwartz (left), son of Board president Ellen Cohen, and Eli Dreyfus, son of Board chair Andrew Dreyfus

disease. In addition, Guthrie connected the idealism of the 1960s he had known so well with the mission of institutions such as the Schwartz



Center that seek to improve ways to provide care for people in need.

In the end, the Schwartz Center's annual dinner offered an opportunity to reflect on the importance of safeguarding empathic health care. With a broad array of programs, the center continues to expand its impact



on health care delivery in Massachusetts and beyond. It is an effort that will continue to grow in the coming year, and, to that end, Andrew Dreyfus announced that the dinner had raised a new record of \$650,000 for the center.

To find out more about the Kenneth B. Schwartz Center and ways you can support its mission, please call the center at (617) 724-4746 or visit its website at:

www.theschwartzcenter.org

"WHAT'S UP DOC?":

Workshops to Enhance Quality of Care for Elders

MANY PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THE ELDERLY, often feel intimidated during an office visit to the doctor. Uncomfortable in a patient gown, patients do not always understand what they are told and may fail to communicate their questions and concerns. The reasons vary but the solution is clear: patients must be active partners in their relationships with caregivers. To help elders with this relationship, the Schwartz Center has given a grant to MATCH-UP Interfaith Volunteers to conduct workshops that teach elders how to communicate effectively with their care providers. Called "What's Up Doc?", the interactive workshops

Over the past two years, with funding from Tufts Health Plan, MATCH-UP has conducted 140 free "What's Up Doc?" workshops to approximately 2,000 elders from Boston.

illustrate — often through role playing or the use of an amusing video — how to ask caregivers questions, how to answer caregivers' questions, and how to communicate concerns to them. Elders are taught practical steps they can take (e.g. making lists of questions) and are advised of their rights and responsibilities as patients.

Over the past two years, with funding from Tufts Health Plan, MATCH-UP has conducted 140 free "What's Up Doc?" workshops to approximately 2,000 elders from Boston. The Schwartz Center grant will enable MATCH-UP to increase the number of workshops offered, including those given in languages other than English (Spanish, Russian and Chinese). The grant will also be used to adapt the current curriculum for a second workshop designed to help family caregivers and eldercare professionals improve communication; the curriculum will be shared with other caregiver groups around the country.

MATCH-UP will conduct professional evaluations to ascertain the effect of both workshops. Currently, elders define their goals after the workshop and are invited to a follow-up session six months later to see if they have changed any behaviors. Seventy percent reported that their communication with their doctor had improved. Participants indicated that they were more confident, better prepared with their questions, and more comfortable talking to their caregivers about their concerns.

MATCH-UP Interfaith Volunteer's mission is to help maintain quality of life for frail isolated elders and disabled adults. The non-profit organization was a pioneer in prioritizing social contact as a means to maintain the physical and mental health of the elderly and in using volunteers to provide this contact.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Cape Cod media gave a great deal of coverage to **Judith Best-Lavigniac, RN, MSN**, the recipient of the Schwartz Center's second annual Compassionate Caregiver of the Year Award. Best-Lavigniac is a nurse practitioner who cares for the homeless at the **O'Neill Health Center** in Hyannis. The *Cape Cod Times* featured a story on her as well as a column by **Dan McCullough**. The *Barnstable Patriot* also did a story and WQRC radio interviewed Best-Lavigniac ... In September, *The Nursing Spectrum* featured a story on the Schwartz Center and quoted **Terry Holbrook, RN**, a Schwartz Center pastoral care fellow. Holbrook, a visiting nurse, said the fellowship program was valuable in helping her relate to patients in a spiritual way ... On the day of the Schwartz Center's annual dinner, *The Herald's* "Inside Track" column mentioned that **Arlo Guthrie** was

The Schwartz Center thanks the following companies for their support of the annual dinner (these names were not included in the dinner program booklet):

Adler Pollock & Sheehan, P.C.
MedImpact Health Care Systems, Inc.
Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps

performing at the dinner ... **Jon DuBois, MD**, chief, Hematology-Oncology, Emerson Hospital, authored the *Viewpoint* column in the September issue of *Hippocrates Magazine* on what can be learned when a patient fires a doctor. The topic was discussed at Emerson Hospital's **Schwartz Center Rounds** and DuBois' article referred to caregivers' comments and experiences as recounted at that Rounds.

RECENT SCHWARTZ CENTER GRANTS

The Schwartz Center has recently given grants to the following organizations for projects that further the center's mission:

Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center — to support research on what physicians with cancer learn from their experience as patients;

Boston Medical Center —

- For a pilot faculty development project involving eight primary care physicians who will develop a model for teaching residents interviewing and related psychosocial skills;
- To support the *Diversity Curriculum Task Force's* ongoing efforts to teach internal medicine residents how to better care for culturally diverse patients;

Northern Berkshire Health Systems — to conduct Schwartz Center Rounds at North Adams Regional Hospital complemented by

a community lecture series (possibly in conjunction with Williams College) and a volunteer training program in end-of-life issues;

American Academy on Physician and Patient (AAPP) — funding to defray costs associated with developing a plan to extend AAPP membership to patients (membership is currently only available to clinicians); and

Evanston Northwestern Healthcare, Illinois — to conduct Schwartz Center Rounds as the first initiative of the hospital's Center for Compassion in Medical Care.

Grants were awarded to *Cooley-Dickinson Hospital* in Northampton, *Fairview Hospital* in Great Barrington, and *Mary Lane Hospital* in Ware, MA, in response to the Schwartz Center and Massachusetts Health Quality Partnership (MHQP) joint *Request for Proposals* seeking creative ideas to improve patient-caregiver communication. Eleven hospitals submitted proposals in response to the RFP.

For your convenience, we have enclosed an envelope should you wish to make an end-of-year donation to the Schwartz Center.

Thank you for your support.

Touchpoints

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