

VALLEY NEWS



Chris Brown, center, and his wife, Alicia, left, get the news on Saturday from Dr. Elizabeth Bengston, right, of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, that Brown's recent bone marrow biopsy is free of leukemia. The Browns wore plastic top

hats and planned to walk one mile inside the Inpatient oncology unit as part of a Hollywood-themed "Indoor Prouty." Brown said he plans to ride in next year's Prouty.

VALLEY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS — JAMES M. PATTERSON

Mini-Prouty, Major Impact

As Thousands Race Outside, Patients Make Indoor Rounds

By MAGGIE CASSIDY
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LEBANON — Donning a medical gown and purple plastic top hat Saturday morning, Karen Rose pushed her IV pole around the floor of One West, the ward at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock

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More photographs from Saturday's Prouty, which raised more than \$3.1 million for cancer care and research.

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Norris Cotton Cancer Center where hospitalized cancer patients receive their care.

Walking along at a steady pace, she smiled as she placed Kit-Kat bars, raisins and watermelon slices on the IV

pole's shelf. The 70-year-old from Claremont said that, since being diagnosed with large cell lymphoma June 19, the debilitating effects of five-day chemotherapy treatments every three weeks mean she doesn't have the energy to "even go out and weed the garden," a source of great frustration. But Saturday was different, because

SEE PROUTY — A6



Judy Caletl, of Hanover, left, a cancer survivor and co-chairwoman of the Prouty executive committee, walks laps with patient Karen Rose, of Claremont, center, to the music of Dr. Tom Davis in One West, the DHHC oncology unit, on Saturday.



Jr. Elizabeth Bengston, left, shows off her Prouty jersey to Bill Finnie, of Franklin, N.H., center, and members of his family as they participate in the Prouty by doing laps around the West, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical center's oncology unit on Saturday. Before visiting

Finnie, his daughter, Kristen Finnie, second from right, his sister, Jillian Miller, right, and friend Jean-Marie Beauchemin, left, participated in Prouty walking events. VALLEY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS — JAMES M. PATTERSON

As Thousands Race Outside, Patients Stage Their Own Mini-Prouty Indoors

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Prouty was the Prouty.

As more than 5,000 bikers, walkers, runners, and golfers dispersed across Hanover, the Upper Valley and beyond for the 34th annual fundraiser at Norris Cotton's cancer research and patient support services, Rose and many other patients, unable to leave the ward, participated in a "Prouty" of their own, a tradition in the ward that has grown in recent years.

"It's party style," Rose said, chuckling as she realized she had lost count of the number of laps she had walked around the circular pathway that connects the nurses' stations. "I haven't really been motivated to get out too much. It's doing good for me."

She continued her route around the sterile floor, which nurses glitzed up with red, black, gold and silver decorations for this year's show-time theme. Participants included loved ones, medical staff and other patients, some walking, some in wheelchairs, most wearing the shiny top hats and addy Holly-esque fake glasses that are passed out for free.

"This picks up your energy a little bit," said 52-year-old Glen Bickford, from central Maine, who is receiving a month of inpatient treatment for myelodysplastic syndrome, also referred to as pre-leukemia. "You're running around."

Another lymphoma patient, 3-year-old Michael Sprague of Manchester, N.H., said he was walking the most he ever had around the ward since arriving May 18 at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, the third hospital in which he's received inpatient care.



Christyna Antoniv, left, dances with her fiance, Andrew Rebeiro, of Thornton, N.H., center, as Robert Trembley of Newport, Vt., rounds the corner while making a lap of One West on Saturday. Patients and staff

at the unit have been participating the Prouty since 2007, walking circles around the unit, with 40 laps equal to a mile. Rebeiro is receiving treatment for gray zone lymphoma and Trembley for acute myeloid leukemia.

When he's in the middle of chemotherapy, Sprague said, he might be able to walk two laps at most, and then "collapse on the bed."

"Right now, I think this is my eighth or ninth lap today," Sprague said, joking that he's a "freshman" at the Prouty since he had never participated in one of the massive fundraisers before. He passed a nurse holding a golden plastic top hat, holding it out for him to wear. "Oh, you want me to put a hat on," he said. "I'll put a hat on!"

In a news release Saturday afternoon, organizers said the Prouty, powered by more than 1,300 volunteers, was the most successful yet, raising more than \$3.1 million and surpassing its fundraising goal on Saturday for the first time in the event's history. More than \$25 million has been raised since the first Prouty in 1982.

Richmond Middle School served as Prouty headquarters, and walkers out on the path in Hanover said the sunny day was perfect for the event.

"It's the best day of the year," said West Lebanon resident Hayley Falzarano, who walked a 10K course with 32-member Team Cura, which was formed in honor of friend Melissa Gove's father-in-law, who died from pancreatic cancer three years ago.

Also walking was Falzarano's mother, Cindy Falzarano, a cancer survivor.

"It's about giving back," Gove said.

The tradition of the inpatient Prouty started in 2007 "in response to patients who wanted to contribute to the fight against cancer," according to an article in a Norris Cotton newsletter provided by Jean Brown, the center's executive director.

"The 2008 version started with one patient, IV pole in hand, and shortly after, seven or eight patients joined them, slowly circling the ward, pushing their chemotherapy infusion poles before them," the article stated. "Some wore hospital gowns and masks, and some wore

the bright red T-shirts of Team Hope, marked with a donkey saying, 'Kick Cancer!'"

Susan Eichholz, the oncology unit supervisor, said in an interview last week that the inpatient Prouty started out "really small."

"But then it just snowballed and it became part of who we are," Eichholz said. "When we hire people we talk about the Prouty because we're trying to raise money for our patients. ... It's just a day that we celebrate with them that we're doing this together because we want to beat cancer."

Carrie Kimball was among the oncology nurses who helped found the Prouty in 1982 after an inspirational patient, Audrey Prouty, lost her battle with ovarian cancer. In an interview last week, she said that, in addition to providing an outlet for patient participation, nurses recognized that the inpatient Prouty is important for families, as well.

"We didn't want the family members to feel like they had to go out, and some of them would say, 'I should at least be volunteering, you nurses do so much,' and it would be like, 'Why don't you stay right here and help so-and-so walk around,'" Kimball said. "So that keeps it family-oriented."

For the patients, families and staff of One West, Saturday was a day of simple pleasures — food and music, moving around and socializing — with profound significance for many of the 33 inpatients and additional outpatients, who, like Rose, find their energy levels at all-time lows during their personal battles with cancer.

In one such significant moment, nurses and hospital staff smiled wide as Cheryl Jones, 48, a leukemia patient from Rutland County, emerged from her room in a wheelchair for a lap around the floor.

"How are you doing?" asked Judy Casari, a co-chairwoman of the Prouty executive committee who wore a

bike helmet, rainbow-colored feathers and a bib saying "survivor."

"I'm wonderful," Jones replied, as she and her crew traveling with her — nurses, friends and Casari — turned a corner past one of the stations.

Casari told Jones she was glad that Jones got to come out.

"Here I am," Jones replied.

Her fiancée's sister, Bev King, said it was a huge moment to see Jones out of the room, as Jones has been struggling.

"It's lifting her up today, because she's been really down," King said. "Her spirits are good. ... It's lifting her up right now."

On the other side of the ward they came upon Ed Cheramie, of Bridgewater Corners, a former stage 4 lymphoma patient at One West who was discharged in May, and Dr. Tom Davis, the director of the hematology and oncology fellowship program. They were jamming on guitar, and Jones put in a request for *Bad, Bad Leroy Brown*.

"Baddest man in the whole damn town," she sang.

After looking up the chords on a smartphone, Davis and Cheramie came through, getting a cluster of patients and nurses to bounce along with the rhythm or twist their feet on the floor.

Like many people there, Jones wore a pair of the Buddy Holly-style glasses. Above her hospital mask, her eyes smiled.

Afterward, Jones said she chose the song because her brother likes to goof around to it on the harmonica, and she figured it would be a fun one.

"They were doing the hockey pokey," she said of the dancers around her.

Among those shimmying was patient Andrew Rebeiro, 42, of Thornton, N.H., and his fiancée Khry-

styma Antoniv — both dressed up in the shiny hats and glasses. Rebeiro has been receiving regular periods of chemotherapy treatment for gray zone lymphoma since late February, and expects to go home on Monday after finishing his sixth and final session.

"It's good to see everybody coming out," Rebeiro said, echoing other patients who said they rarely got a chance to meet each other because they mostly stay in their rooms and rest.

By contrast, on Saturday, he skated around on his IV pole from time to time — at least when the nurses weren't watching — and he and Antoniv joked about having an "after-party" in Rebeiro's hospital room.

"Bring your own bottle," she joked. After participating in the larger Prouty, Dr. Mark Israel, director of the Norris Cotton Cancer Center, came to take part in the Prouty in miniature.

He said both the larger Prouty and the smaller version are vital for patients — both in funding important and needed research that will improve their care, and in reminding patients that there are huge communities and support systems behind them.

"I think it's empowering because you realize you're not alone in this," Israel said, calling the effects "very real."

Rebeiro agreed, underscoring the fact that, even with all of the festivities, it's important to remember that cancer is immensely challenging.

"Next year maybe I'll ride (the Prouty) if I can help people out, because this sucks," he said of his diagnosis. He said he'd like to see research funds be dedicated to more alternative methods of treatment beyond chemotherapy.

Once chemotherapy starts, he said, "you don't battle cancer anymore, you battle chemotherapy," referring to the treatment's many side effects.

As the festivities were winding down at around 1 p.m., patient Chris Brown, of Hollis, N.H., who has been receiving inpatient treatment for acute myeloid leukemia for a month, and his wife, Alicia, were continuing their laps — aiming to finish 40 for one mile while wearing shiny red hats — when Dr. Elizabeth Bengston approached them carrying a laptop near one of the nurses' stations.

The news was overwhelming: Chris Brown had a bone marrow biopsy taken on Friday, and results weren't expected for a couple more days. But sitting in his hospital room a short time later, he said Bengston's news on the laptop was "exactly what we wanted to hear" — that the biopsy was free of leukemia, a major milestone as he continues to receive care.

Overcome by emotion, the couple embraced, still wearing their shiny red hats and surrounded by balloons and other decorations.

The unexpected diagnosis and last month of treatment, Chris Brown said, has been "hellish," but the positivity of the day, even before the huge news about his biopsy, was helpful.

"It's feeling less like a hospital and more like a little party," Alicia Brown said.

The news about the biopsy, Chris Brown said, made him feel like "they set it up all just for me." □

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