

Joan Edghill

Ribbons of Survivors 365 “Multiple Myeloma Cancer” Honoree 2019

Joan Edghill (born Kingston, Jamaica W.I.) with both parents Jamaican, primarily of African, English and Scottish heritage. Her father was from St. Elizabeth and her mother from Clarendon. She is also a proud mother of four children, Richard, Denise, Michael, and Stephen. She was employed as a Stockbroker for Fidelity Investments and Schwab Brokerage companies. She passed the Series 7, Series 8, and Series 63 examinations. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She later decided to become a certified Florida teacher and earned a master's degree in Elementary Education. She taught at Hiawassee Elementary School for 15 years.



In October 4, 2018, her life changed forever, when a bone marrow biopsy confirmed that she had Multiple Myeloma. Joan and her daughter Denise were stunned. Neither of them had even heard of that particular cancer before. Multiple Myeloma is a condition, where plasma cells become cancerous and multiplies. The disease can damage the bones, immune system, kidneys, and red blood cell count. It was her unyielding faith that gave her the strength and the purpose to make it through her ordeal. She therefore gives praise and glory to God who never left or forsook her.

The disease causes fatigue and muscle weakness. Joan's daughter and her husband kindly invited her to stay with them at their home. It was a blessing, as the stairs at her townhouse had become increasingly difficult to climb. Her oncologist treated the cancer with chemotherapy, steroids and other medications. In the beginning the treatment caused diarrhea, vomiting, and severe gastrointestinal problems. Later the doses were adjusted, and she was able to tolerate the medications better. After several months of treatment, it was decided that she was a suitable candidate for a bone marrow transplant.

The purpose of the transplant was to put the disease in remission. The transplant would use her own stem cells (autologous transplant). It was scheduled to take place at Shands Hospital in Gainesville, Florida. The process prior to the transplant was lengthy and complicated. She was required to visit Shands for an evaluation to ensure that it was safe for her to undergo the transplant. She was medically cleared to have the transplant but was advised that it would not take place if she did not have a caregiver to stay with her during outpatient treatments in Gainesville.

Joan's daughter Denise took the initiative to ensure that she had a caregiver to cover all her outpatient stays in Gainesville. She is forever grateful to her and to her friends who took time out of their daily lives to be her caregiver. She is also grateful for all the prayers, kindness and good wishes from her friends and family. Hope Lodge-Winn-Dixie in Gainesville was kind enough to accommodate her at no cost. They are a wonderful organization. To begin the process for the bone marrow transplant she received daily injections of growth factor to increase stem cell production and to move stem cells into her circulating blood so that they could be collected.

After several weeks, Joan returned to Gainesville, Florida to have her stem cells removed and stored. During this process, blood was drawn from a vein and circulated through a machine. The machine separated her blood into different parts, including stem cells. The stem cells were collected and frozen for future use in the transplant. The remaining blood was returned to her body. Prior to the transplant she was given a very powerful dose of chemotherapy that destroyed all her cells and completely depleted her immune system. Two days later her healthy stem cells were unfrozen and given to her. Those stem cells are expected to become engrafted into her bone marrow. This put the cancer in remission. The transplant was successful, and she currently is doing well, although she has periodic bouts of tiredness. In time her immune system will improve, and she will feel less fatigued. Her desire is to help others with various illnesses. She started a prayer group, where she goes to the homes of people who request prayer and fellowship. Again, she gives all praise to God for His goodness and mercy.

Joan involved in bringing awareness to her Jamaican culture as an active member of The Jamaican American Association of Central Florida, Inc., please them online at <https://www.jaaocf.com>.

Written by Joan Edghill
Multiple Myeloma Cancer Awareness
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