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Becky Snyder and Christina Cardoso

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

BY ANDREA BOSCO
PHOTOGRAPH BY CAYLA ZAHORAN

“At one time, our city was a steel town — now, it’s a knowledge town,” says Becky Snyder, on Pittsburgh’s top-notch health care. She will join Christina Cardoso — with her husband, Carlos — for their second consecutive year as Hillman Cancer Center Gala co-chairs on October 24 at CONSOL Energy Center. Recruited after years of support for the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) and UPMC CancerCenter, the community leaders are ambitious to diffuse awareness and celebrate the partners, physicians, and clinicians responsible for its success. “Primarily, [the gala] is to honor the scientists and researchers, our invited guests, and our sponsors,” says Cardoso. “We will also have two wonderful opportunities for patients to tell stories about the impact the center has had on them.”

Last year, at the gala, \$5.5 million was recognized in support of cancer research at UPCI and patient care at UPMC CancerCenter.

New to the Facility

An airy, open floor in the Hillman Cancer Center, the Mario Lemieux Center for Blood Cancers is “a modern and comfortable environment for our patients,” says Dr. Stanley Marks, chairman, director of clinical services, and chief medical officer of UPMC CancerCenter. With a focus on good science, smart technology, and patient-centered care, the area features a lounge, a private treatment center, state-of-the-art equipment and specialized care,

and an inviting rooftop terrace with a putting green and a view of the Cathedral of Learning. "Our hope is that patients walk into the most warm and welcoming environment that they could imagine at a very difficult time in their lives," says Dr. Nancy Davidson, UPCI and UPMC CancerCenter director, and renowned breast cancer researcher.

Philanthropic Trailblazers

Snyder and the Cardosos have believed in the organization's mission for some time. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Snyder's company, Franco Associates, was involved in the construction of the Hillman Cancer Center. As a large-project contractor, she says she feels fortunate to have become involved in the community. A board member and trustee for the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation and Seton Hill University, the Chatham graduate was first introduced to the gala as a guest and has served as a gala host committee member since its inception. "We're so thankful for Becky to have joined us, and for her father's support," says Cardoso of Snyder, daughter of Pittsburgh construction magnate Charles "Corky" Cost. The New York native, and Carlos, Kennametal CEO, who hails from Portugal, serves on UPCI Council, and sits on the board of the Children's Institute of Pittsburgh, say they were thrilled to have been considered for the opportunity to serve as event co-chairs. "I have lived in a lot of places — we travel frequently — and I do have to say, this really is a world-class center and a first-class city." All are personal friends of honorary co-chair, UPCI chairman, and PNC Bank Pittsburgh President Sy Holzer, his wife, Cathy, and honorary co-chairs Elsie and Henry Hillman.

Community Involvement

During the gala, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra will perform the world premiere of three compositions inspired by the patients, physicians, and researchers at the facility. This year's theme is Living Courageously, A Future Without Cancer, which Snyder says is the goal of her and the Cardosos' awareness efforts. "We are so fortunate to have the health care that we do here," she says. "It's phenomenal. [The Hillman Cancer Center], in particular, in its 11th year, is just fabulous, and we want to honor the patients, families, researchers, doctors, clinicians, nurses, and everybody that's involved in this process going forward." Presented by PNC Financial Services Group, the gala's sponsorship levels range from \$2,500 to \$50,000 — and beyond. "From individuals to families, trusts, organizations, and corporations, it's remarkable," says Cardoso. "We're very fortunate to have the community here supporting us as much as they do." "When patients are this sick and are going through treatment, [the center] enhances an experience that is traumatic," says Snyder. Cardoso agrees: "The holistic approach of the center is priceless and what we can give them during their course of treatment is so important, for them and for their families."

Special Recognition

This year, the PNC/UPCI Director's Distinguished Scholar Award will be given to Dr. Theresa L. Nimick-Whiteside, professor of pathology, immunology, and otolaryngology. "The award is given annually to a scientist who further supports and advances innovative cancer research at UPCI," says Snyder. The UPMC staff members stress how important the gala is for acknowledging the passionate people who share in their mission. "To be in their presence and in the company of supporters and patients on the evening of the gala will be remarkable," says Cardoso. "We're so fortunate to have this organization in our community." "We're so honored to receive the continued and new support of gifts each year," adds Snyder. "It's allows us to move forward, and for them to become part of the awareness." © UPMC CancerCenter, upmccancercenter.com. University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, upci.upmc.edu.

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