

Melanie Bone's Lavender Luncheon to raise funds for kits to comfort cancer patients

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When someone is undergoing treatment for cancer, the gifts family members and friends provide, though well-intentioned, sometimes miss the target, according to Dr. Melanie Bone, a West Palm Beach gynecologic surgeon and breast cancer survivor.

Cut flowers die within a few days.

And patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy may not be able to handle chocolate if their stomachs are queasy, Bone said.

"People say that's comfort food, but when you feel lousy, chocolate is not necessarily the first thing you want to reach for after treatments. That's how we got this idea of practical gifts for cancer patients," she said.

Through her four-year-old Cancer Sensibility Foundation, Bone has developed cancer kits filled with useful items for cancer patients. Recently, she and Susan Harrison, the foundation's merchandising director, developed a cancer kit for kids after talking to oncology nurses in the community.

Among the many items in those kits — which are adjusted for the child's age and gender — are a flashlight (so kids can read or play games after lights out), anti-nausea lollipops, high-protein cookies, a tote bag for juice and snacks, a journal and more.

"When children are getting IVs, they can get them in their hands and arms and those sites get sore," Bone said. "So we have little stuffed animals you can make hot or cold to put on sore body parts."

The aim of the foundation's inaugural Chic Lit Lavender Luncheon, to be held April 12 in Palm Beach, is to raise funds to provide cancer kits for children, including those receiving care the week of April 22 at St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach and Palms West Hospital in Loxahatchee. The guest speaker will be Emily Giffin, author of *Something Borrowed* and four other New York Times best-sellers.

Luke Greenfield, director of the movie adaptation of *Something Borrowed* (set for release May 6), is also expected to attend, Bone said.

Planned donation called 'awesome'

Pediatric oncology nurse Jackie Florentino of St. Mary's called the foundation's announced donation awesome.

Activities that can keep kids' minds off their treatment are valuable, Florentino said, as are anti-nausea pops.

The medications cancer patients are given to relieve nausea taste bitter, Florentino said. "So I think that's a great idea."

The journal is also of benefit. "It becomes a very emotional and spiritual journey with them and their families. I think having a guide will help channel some of the emotions they are dealing with as children," Florentino said.

For more information on the luncheon or foundation, call 427-4564, email Megan Zwaans at MZwaans@CancerSensibility.org or visit cancersensibility.org.

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