

## STREET TALK

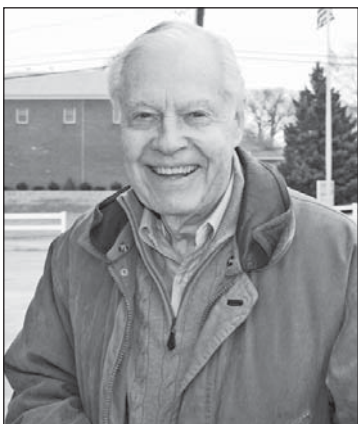
By Ted Hills

## What's the best part about the Oscars?



It's America's royalty.

SUSAN CINCOTTA



When the winner comes up with an original and irreverent speech.

FORREST COMPTON



The dresses people are wearing.

FELICITY WILLIAMS  
AND CAITLYN MULCAHY

# Ten years of giving

Hannabury's dream lives on, to be celebrated Saturday at Gift of Life gala

BY TED HILLS | STAFF REPORTER

One of the greatest challenges a person can experience is the diagnosis of a life-threatening disease. For the patient and the family, it's a moment of sadness, helplessness and often confusion.

But sometimes this challenge leads to great expressions of love and support. This Saturday, March 6, the Shelter Island community will renew its love and support at the 10th annual "Cheryl Hannabury Celebration of Life Community Cocktail Party" at the Ram's Head Inn. The event will raise money to aid patients with life-threatening diseases, help expand the bone marrow registry and commemorate the start of the organization's 10th year.

As both a recipient of help from the Shelter Island community and a founding member of the Gift of Life Foundation, Cheryl Hannabury was well aware of the power and importance of this support.

When she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma just a few days before Christmas in 1992, she lacked health insurance. But through the generous help of the Presbyterian Church and fundraising efforts from the Shelter Island community, Ms. Hannabury was able to pay for two bone marrow transplants, both very costly procedures.

She organized a meeting on January 15, 2001 with Bill and Casey Hannabury, Kathy King, Ed and Cheryl Brown, James and Linda Eklund, and Sarah Shepherd to create an organization to help people cope with life-threatening illnesses like her own. With the help of some generous donations, the Gift of Life became a non-profit 501c(3) foundation just a few weeks later.

"Helping others was Cheryl's dream," said her mother, Charlotte Hannabury. "That's why she began this, so that others could be helped just as she was helped along the way."

Although she lost her battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2002, her dream lives on through the continued work of the Island Gift of Life Foundation, which now serves patients in Southold, Southampton, East Hampton and Shelter Island.

The foundation is comprised of an all-volunteer team of insurance and medical professionals, social workers, clergy and a number of other community members from different fields. Since its inception, the foundation has distributed nearly a quarter of a million dollars in direct grants to 27 people.

But those figures don't fully account for all that the organization has accomplished, which is more difficult to quantify. For example, members of the foundation negotiate directly with doctors, hospitals and insurance providers to gain reduced treatment charges for a patient, and help guide patients



REPORTER FILE PHOTOS

Cheryl Hannabury (right of Pastor Bill Grimbol) in 1999 with her grandmother Olive Congdon. Cheryl died in 2002 but her legacy will be celebrated, as it was in this 2008 photo (above), at the Gift of Life fundraiser on March 6 at the Ram's Head Inn.

through the maze of health-care costs to make sure they receive what they're entitled to. The expert Medical Advisory Committee can help direct patients through the often difficult process of finding the right doctors.

The president of the Island Gift of Life Foundation, James Eklund, explained "It's bad enough to be sick, but when you're all of a sudden faced with all this red tape about who's covering what, where the money's coming from, and asking, 'am I entitled to something that I'm not getting,' ... To know that somebody else is looking into that is a big comfort."

Patients can also receive free or cost-reduced transportation to get medical attention or receive bone marrow transplants — transportation is often an expensive necessity, since donors can be thousands of miles away. The foundation continues to work to expand the bone marrow registry, too, by sponsoring blood drives and encouraging those who participate to get tested for a bone-marrow match.

The organization tries to accommodate as many of the patients' needs as possible. For instance, it gave a child with a rare bone disease transportation to Boston Children's Hospital, arranged with the hospital to lower an outstanding bill, and then paid a large portion of that bill. The Gift of Life helped a severely debilitated patient with multiple sclerosis by applying for disability insurance, arranging for frequent custodial visits to the home, installing a Med Alert system and renovating the house to make it more accessible.



Dr. Frank Adipietro, a member of the Medical Advisory Committee, described the foundation's services as "a comprehensive type of medical care, which is very unique."

But it's not just the services that are so helpful to patients in dire situations: "If people feel that somebody is willing to reach out to them and help them, it can change their lives. There's a positive energy involved with this whole process. As a physician, I feel that's very important for terminally ill patients and chronically ill patients."

Mr. Eklund agrees: "I think that's one of the biggest things we offer people, to let them know that there are people who are concerned about them."

If you'd like to be one of those people, don't miss the "Cheryl Hannabury Celebration of Life Community Cocktail Party" on March 6. It will feature live music, buffet, open bar and an auction run by Ken Lewis. Tickets are \$35 and available at Casey's Nail Salon, the Chequit Inn or from Gift of Life board members. All proceeds benefit the foundation.

For more information, to donate or to get involved with the Gift of Life Foundation, call (631) 774-0110.