

In January 2012, Anne developed inexplicable dizziness and became ill, prompting a trip to Martha Jefferson's Emergency Department. Tests revealed a tumor on Anne's lung with metastasis to her brain, causing an imminent risk. Reeling from the shock of such a frightful diagnosis, Anne and Bob turned to Martha Jefferson neurosurgeon Dr. Sandeep Teja, who quickly scheduled the urgently needed procedure. Within two days of her diagnosis, Anne underwent surgery at Martha Jefferson to remove the mass. Dr. Teja successfully removed the tumor, and Anne immediately began to feel better, with the most distressing of her physical symptoms relieved.

As Anne recovered in the Intensive Care Unit following surgery, Chaplain Suzanne Hilton Smith and Advanced Practice Nurse Mina Ford of the Martha Jefferson Palliative Care Team helped Anne and Bob discuss care options and weigh the pros and cons of their choices. The team also helped the couple share this information with their son, who lives and works in Louisville, KY. Since the diagnosis had identified an invasive form of the disease, Anne and Bob opted to pursue an aggressive treatment to stem the spread of the cancer through a course of chemotherapy and radiation.

Radiation oncologist Dr. Sylvia Hendrix and oncologist Dr. Stefan Gorsch then joined the Rafajko care team, and a plan was put in place to begin radiation treatments and chemotherapy. Anne

The Martha Jefferson Palliative Care Team provides an additional layer of support and comfort for people coping with serious illness. The team partners with the patient, family and other physicians to provide:

*Relief
Information
Choices and Control
Continuity*

continued her treatments through the spring, during which time palliative care played a key role in improving and maximizing her quality of life.

In April, tests unfortunately revealed that the cancer had spread to Anne's hip and femur. Now facing a decision on potential joint replacement, the Rafajko family once again worked with the Palliative Care Team to consider treatment options and help alleviate Anne's increasing levels of pain.

When Palliative Care Team members learned during Anne's stay of her deep love of animals, they arranged to have Bagel and Triscuit, the hospital's volunteer canine visitors, pay visits to Anne in her room, which brought her much joy during a difficult time (see sidebar below). Martha Jefferson staff also grew quite close to Anne during her stay. Photos of the Rafajko family adorned Anne's room, and the staff was privileged to learn about the richness of

Anne and Bob's life together through the stories the couple shared with them.

In spite of her choices for aggressive treatment, Anne's disease progressed, and in May she required further hospitalization. Though her condition and medications caused her to sleep much of the time, Anne continued to find joy and comfort in visits from the hospital volunteer canines and in the presence of her family. Bob shared that among all the wonderful Martha Jefferson staff, one hospital aide, Cathy Gibson, became so dear to Anne that she could inspire a smile and kiss to the cheek from Anne, even when Anne was less responsive to her environment.

Then, sadly, on May 13, Anne Sloan Rafajko passed away.

"I don't know what we would have done without the Palliative Care Team and the nurses and medical staff who took such loving care of Anne," reflected Bob. "She was treated as a whole person, and her goals were solicited thoughtfully and respected throughout her illness.

I continue to be supported as I grieve the loss of my wife, best friend and life partner. Andrew and I are so grateful to the physicians, nurses and the Palliative Care Team of Martha Jefferson. While we continue to cope with our loss and the rapid progression of her disease, we can rest in the knowledge that her wishes were followed, that everything was done to ensure she had quality care, and that she did not suffer." ▶

THE HEALING POWER OF PETS

For the animal lovers among us, it's easy to imagine the uplifting effect of a visit from one of these lovable Labs, Triscuit and Bagel, whose wagging tails and enthusiastic affection make them extremely popular when their handler, Carol Easter, brings them to Martha Jefferson. Easter brings one of these canine companions with her each week to visit patients at Martha Jefferson who wish to have them stop by for a warm and often therapeutic greeting.

Martha Jefferson Hospital developed and instituted a Canine Therapeutic Volunteer Program in 2008, and since then, volunteers with specially trained and certified therapy dogs have brought joy to many patients who, like Anne Rafajko, have a special connection with animals.

For more information on Martha Jefferson's Hospital Canine Volunteer Program, contact Michele Shepherd at michele.shepherd@mjh.org.



Bagel, Carol Easter and Triscuit