

# Lifting a financial burden for cancer patients

**BY MARY SARAVIA BUSBY**  
For the Times-Georgian

Like many people throughout the country, west Georgians have felt the harsh impact of our soft economy. The rising cost of basic necessities, combined with record unemployment in the region, has forced many families to tighten their budgets.

One Haralson County family had adjusted to the challenging economy when they received unexpected news: a cancer diagnosis.

"I was diagnosed on Jan. 24 with stage one mucinous carcinoma of the breast," said Patty Harrell. "They said that it was rare."

According to the American Association for Cancer Research, mucinous carcinoma accounts for just 2 percent of all breast cancers. It begins when a tumor forms in the milk duct and spreads into nearby healthy tissue. The good news was that it typically responds well to treatment.

The bad news was that even with health insurance, a cancer diagnosis strains many budgets and places a heavy burden on families. Many patients are unable to work while receiving cancer treatments because of the impact of both the disease and the treatment. Families already balancing the normal day-to-day expenses are now faced with costs for medication, treatment and other expenses related to their cancer care.

"First I had a lumpectomy, then the chemo was next," said Harrell. "I took four treatments

of chemo three weeks apart. And then they gave me a little time off before I started radiation."

With quiet determination and the support of her family, friends and "church family" at Highland Baptist Church in Tallapoosa, Harrell endured radiation treatments for 24 consecutive days, with just one exception: the Fourth of July.

Following her radiation treatment, she was prescribed a breast cancer medication that was not covered by her insurance.

"It was about \$300 for a 30-day supply," said Harrell. "I told Dr. Shepherd and my nurse navigator, Jane Baker, that I would not be able to afford that medication."

She soon received the news that the Choirs for Cancer Fund at Tanner Medical Foundation would be able to provide assistance with the cost of her cancer medication.

"I just felt like a load had been lifted," said Harrell. "I felt so thankful that there are still people with means that can help people like me. I didn't even know about the fund until Jane (Baker) told me it could help. Everyone was so good to me at Tanner."

Community support of the Choirs for Cancer Fund makes it possible to help lift some of the financial burden of cancer care. Since 2010, more than \$170,000 has been raised to assist local cancer patients.

There are many ways to support the fund. Community members can create a "Personal Page," an



**Patty Harrell of Tallapoosa received assistance with her breast cancer medication from the Choirs for Cancer Fund at Tanner Medical Foundation. She and her husband Emmett say they have been blessed by the community support that makes the fund possible.**

easy-to-build fund raising Web page at [www.ChoirsForCancer.org](http://www.ChoirsForCancer.org). Sponsorship and ticket sales for the annual Choirs for Cancer concert are another source of support, along with tax-deductible donations to Tanner Medical Foundation.

There is a powerful and lasting impact of the Choirs for Cancer fund. Harrell's husband, Emmet Harrell, became emotional describing what it meant to him.

"For us it has really been a blessing. It really has," he said. "You know, if someone has never been in a life threatening situa-

**'I just felt like a load had been lifted. A felt so thankful that there are still people with means that can help people like me. I didn't even know about the fund until Jane (Baker) told me it could help. Everyone was so good to me at Tanner.'**

• PATTY HARRELL

tion, it's kind of hard to understand what it feels like to go through it or watch your loved one go through it. And believe me it's not easy. It's really not."

"Had it not been for the help we received, we could not have got-

ten the treatment that she needed when she needed it," continued Mr. Harrell. "It helps to know there's a friend out there even if they don't know us."

Tanner Medical Foundation will host the fourth annual Choirs for

Cancer concert at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 21, at the Joshua R. Mabry Center for the Arts at Carrollton High School. This thrilling night of celebration and song will feature Grammy and Dove award winner Babbie Mason, the celebrated Georgia Spiritual Ensemble performing profoundly moving spirituals, humorist Ken Kington and more exciting performers.

Tickets are \$20 each and can be purchased online in early October at [www.ChoirsForCancer.org](http://www.ChoirsForCancer.org), by calling Tanner Medical Foundation at 770-812-GIFT (4438).

**ESTATE ADMINISTRATION**

- ESTATE PLANNING TAXATION
- CRIMINAL • LITIGATION
- DOMESTIC REAL ESTATE
- ELDER LAW • BUSINESS FORMATION

**We are a proud supporter of Breast Cancer Awareness**

FULL SERVICE FUNERALS, CREMATIONS AND PRE-NEED

40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO FAMILIES IN OUR AREA...

**J. Hoyt Thomas FUNERAL HOME**

1011 Topaz Lane • Villa Rica, Georgia 30180  
[jhoytthomas.com](http://jhoytthomas.com) • Phone: 770-459-3676

**1 in 8\***

*\*According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight women will face invasive breast cancer during their lifetime. Get checked and share with the ones you love!*

820 Dixie Street ■ CARROLLTON

7:30 am—8:00 pm M-F 7:30 am—3:00 pm Sat

**We Have the Longest Hours in Town. Really!**

**CharterBANK**

[www.charterbank.net](http://www.charterbank.net)

Newnan | Peachtree City | LaGrange | West Point  
East Alabama | Florida Panhandle