

February 4, 2014

## **GCS wants volunteers to pay it forward**

Vaishali Patel, The Union-Recorder

MILLEDGEVILLE — Nearly 160 area cancer patients are needing more than just monetary donations. Georgia Cancer Support (GCS) hopes to alleviate everyday chores and emotional stress for cancer patients with the help of community volunteers, but limited volunteer support has made it difficult to provide aid for simple tasks.

“We at Georgia Cancer Support get to help cancer patients and we get the blessings of people who receive help. We want the community to see these cancer patients, help them and get a blessing in return, but our number one problem is getting people to help us,” said Robbie White, GCS founder. “We have about 158 cancer patients and over 47 of those patients are continually coming back; their situation doesn’t get fixed overnight. We’re averaging five to 10 new patients each month and we’re getting a lot of calls from outside our area. Money is great, but there are a lot of people that need additional services, like someone to call and check on them, or take them to pick up their medicines or groceries.”

In an effort to encourage more community volunteers to assist in extending the mission of GCS by helping cancer patients and their families, individuals, schools, churches and organizations will be recognized and rewarded at the end of the year with a \$500 cash award for earning the most volunteer points. Each hour of service or activity earns one point. The Community Service Award will be given in early January 2015.

“People can help us raise money by helping with our events, or they can start their own fundraiser for [GCS] to collect donations and earn extra points for creativity. Everybody has value, whether they give one hour, 20 hours or 100 hours,” White said. “This award is for anyone in Georgia. We can provide ideas for fundraisers that are outside of what we do, but our committee has to approve it first. Every time someone volunteers, they will be recognized on our website, Facebook and Twitter pages.”

The Community Service Award is in memory of White’s brother, Steve Podskoc, who died in mid-November from a massive heart attack at age 56.

“When we started [GCS], we wanted to expand to north Georgia as well since I used to live there. My brother stepped out and just went above and beyond to help. When he died, his wife and family wanted contributions to go to [GCS] in lieu of flowers,” White said. “We were able to raise over \$1,000, so we’re using the money in Steve’s memory to fund the Community Service Award.”

GCS kicks off the sale of tickets today for its annual Tea for Hope fundraiser, slated at 3 p.m. Saturday, May 3 at the home of Trish Ann at Standing Rocks Farm located at 2653 Ga. Highway 49 in Haddock. Tickets are \$30 and include an English tea party, a meal, live auction, silent auction and entertainment. A group discount is also available for 12 or more.

“We wouldn’t be where we are without the volunteers from Georgia College. We average about six to 10 Georgia College students for an event. If we can get 10 people to volunteer each week, we can help more people and expand in more areas. We need the community to step up too, just as these students have who have a passion to give back,” White said. “Once people realize the impact they can have on someone’s life, they will get involved in other community organizations in Milledgeville, and that will help service even more people in the community. We need to share those blessings, but it’s going to take volunteers to help.”

For more information about the Community Service Award, to register to earn points, or donate funds, call 478-731-9390 or visit [www.gacancersupport.com](http://www.gacancersupport.com).