

Turning a Vision In to a Reality

BERNADETTE LAURITZEN *Special to the Monitor*

Life feels pretty wonderful when a plan comes together. This week, a plan some would say was about a decade in the making will work its magic. The Los Alamos Medical center, the Los Alamos Council on Cancer and the American Cancer Society will open the Cancer Corner Resource center at LAMC Tuesday.

The ribbon cutting will take place from 11:30 am - 1:30 pm and many volunteers are hoping Fred Gross will be in attendance to see a vision come to fruition.

Gross and his wife Sue had that vision almost 10 years ago when Sue was diagnosed with breast cancer. After she had the cancer removed, she became part of a support group to boost morale.

Local cancer patients and survivors found it hard to acquire items, such as hairpieces and breast prosthesis, while receiving services on the Hill. Vendors would often show samples while sitting in small areas of the medical center, a few times a week.

Sue was a member of the Ladies Auxiliary since the 1970s. The auxiliary, is a volunteer helping arm of the medical center, known as "the pink ladies." Sue later got Fred to join and, at that time, he was only the second male member following the lead of T.J. Cooper. You'll find the dapper dons dressed not in pink, but in white trousers and red blazers.

While you won't find Fred taking much credit for the Cancer Corner, Christina Brady, a Los Alamos American Cancer Society (ACS) liaison refers to him as, "The man who made the room happen."

Fred recalls a conversation with LAMC Administrator Sandra Podley where he asked if there might be an empty room available where cancer patients could get information and additional resources. Much to his surprise, the answer was yes. Podley is one person Gross feels is responsible for the resulting space. "She's awfully nice," said Gross, "She could make things happen."

And so they did. After some touring, cleaning, painting and time off during the remodel, that day will finally arrive on Tuesday. Thanks to the generous help of Bernice Williams and Christina Brady, their organizations and a host of community support, the Cancer Corner will be open for business.

"The Cancer Corner is a place where people who are dealing with cancer can come and try on wigs, prostheses, attend a Look Good Feel Better class, or just come and read. We've tried to

make it a place to relax and be at peace," Willaims said.

Brady invites family members and the community in general to turn out for the big day. "Everyone and anyone who cares about supporting people who are dealing with cancer is invited to come by and enjoy the collection of efforts our community has produced," said Brady.

Williams has volunteered many hours organizing, painting and promoting the work in our little slice of heaven.

The resources will include scarves, hats and prosthesis (from the American Cancer Society Gift Closet) and information on non-medical resources created to help individuals with cancer look good, improve their self-esteem, and manage their treatment and recovery with greater confidence.

A tough economy couldn't deter the process. Some donated for the hard work put in by volunteers, others made donations due to having family situations where they've experienced cancer along the way.

While all of those that pitched in to make this day happen couldn't be named, individuals like Zach Fulton, Dana D'Andrea, Wilbur Bergquist, Peggy Reneau, Emmy Hopson, Adriana Fernandez, Henrik Sandin, Gretchen Kierstead and Marilyn Yeamans and business or organizations like Los Alamos Home Improvements, Village Arts, Tech Support Inc., Metzger's, Mesa Public Library and Chair Works are some.

Sue Gross had survived breast cancer, which was eventually followed by a bout with hip cancer. Fred lost Sue in 2007, but her memory and ideas will live on with the dedication this Tuesday. When asked what Sue would think of the big day, Gross says, "I think she'd be very, very pleased."

The Cancer Corner is located across from the old Emergency Room at the west end of the hallway. Signs will be posted and representatives from Los Alamos Council on Cancer, American Cancer Society and Los Alamos Medical Center will be on hand to greet supporters. If community members are interested in the resources available, but can't attend Tuesday's event, call Kathy Semelsberger, ATU at 661 9210 or visit the website at www.losalamoscounciloncancer.org