

COMFORTER

A NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHAPLAINCY AND PASTORAL EDUCATION AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS M. D. ANDERSON CANCER CENTER AND THE CHAPLAINCY FUND, INC.

Director of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Education Department

As I approach the completion of my first “official” year as Chaplaincy Director, I marvel at how quickly the time has passed, and how so much has changed. As I sit here in my office composing this article, construction and landscaping crews are outside my window, literally changing the face of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. After several years of planning and non-stop controlled chaos here on campus, what is emerging is a beautiful venue for patients, families and staff, an environment that lifts the spirit, in the context of a community dedicated to healing and wholeness.

Each day brings new opportunities and challenges that invite us to stretch beyond our comfort zones toward our goal of Making Cancer History. I’m proud of our staff and the contributions we have made to this noble cause. At the risk of leaving out so many worthy colleagues, this edition of the *Comforter* highlights our CPE Coordinator, Michael Schirmacher, who was awarded Staff Educator of the Year 2004-2005. We are so proud of Michael and the fact that he is the first Chaplaincy member to be the recipient of such an auspicious honor. His dedication to the Clinical Pastoral Education program has resulted in making it an excellent choice for those interested in receiving training in the art of pastoral care. A recent *Houston Chronicle* article provided the community with insights into the making of the CPE program, including perspectives shared by the CPE students, supervisor, and alumni. It has received a great deal of positive comments from readers.

I’m also proud to announce that on June 6, CPE Associate Supervisor Mirjam Berger will join the Chaplaincy Department to fill the newly designated position of Coordinator of Community Chaplaincy Programs. Her presence will

allow us to further develop community-based training programs (clergy and lay persons) and outpatient ministry. Her certification as a CPE supervisor will also enhance our current CPE program.

I’m pleased to announce that Rabbi Samuel Karff has accepted our invitation to be the guest speaker at the second annual Sr. Alice Potts Endowed Lectureship. Rabbi Karff is an acknowledged leader in the area of spirituality and health, bringing a wealth of pastoral and research experience to bear on the topic. This year’s lecture will take place on Friday, October 28th at noon, in the Hickey Auditorium. The community is invited to attend this event, which promises to be an enlightening opportunity for the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and Houston area communities.

At this year’s Association of Professional Chaplains Conference, held in Albuquerque, staff chaplains Christiana Liem, Stephen Findley and Glenda McDonald successfully completed the necessary paperwork and committee appearance to become APC board certified chaplains. This is a significant accomplishment in their professional development and further enhances our department’s ability to provide effective pastoral care.

At the start of this article, I shared my observation that there have been many changes during my first “official” year as Director of Chaplaincy. Some changes were planned; some came as a complete surprise. It seems to me, as I step back, that life is like that – one minute we’re in control, making plans for the future, and the next moment, we are left at the mercy of forces we don’t really



Reverend David R. Jenkins

comprehend. The sudden passing of my father, Ronald Jenkins, during Easter left me to ponder once again the deeper mysteries of life, those moments we can’t necessarily plan for or change. In the midst of the chaos my family and I have felt buoyed by your kind thoughts and prayers and acts of love. It gives me great comfort to know that I live and work with friends and neighbors who are willing and able to help carry the burden when things aren’t going as planned. On behalf of the Chaplaincy Department, I want to express thanks for your faithful support that enables us to serve others by sharing the love of God in the context of illness. May God bless you and keep you, until we meet again.

Schirmacher Named M.D. Anderson Staff Educator of the Year

Michael Schirmacher, coordinator of clinical pastoral education in the Department of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Education at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, was recognized recently as the institution's Staff Educator of the Year.

Schirmacher is responsible for the recruitment and training of yearlong CPE fellows, summer CPE interns and a CPE supervisor-in-training.

Thomas Burke, M.D., executive vice president and physician-in-chief at M.D. Anderson, presented the award and quoted from a nomination for Schirmacher; "Michael's love of learning is contagious. He is an expert in the use of clinical verbatim and case studies, which enables students to link practice with reflection."

The chaplain consistently demonstrates integrity and caring toward his students and the CPE program. He is known for designing creative curricula and teaching methods, including using movie segments and narrative theology as a means of communicating the patient's experience. His CPE students and staff typically excel in their vocation after graduating from the program. He also is credited with maintaining the accreditation of the CPE program.

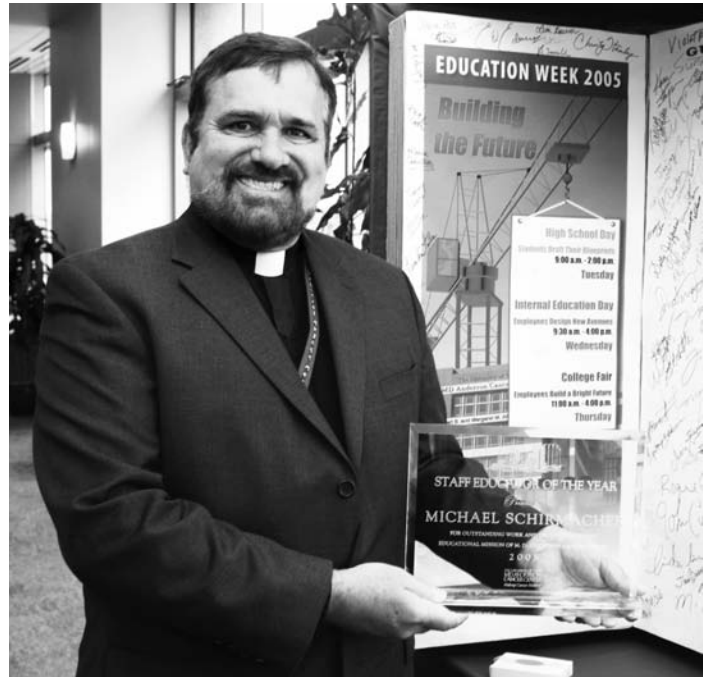
An ordained Episcopal priest, Schirmacher received a bachelor of music from American University and a master of divinity from the Episcopal Divinity School, with postgraduate studies in counseling and education at Johns Hopkins University. He came to M.D.

Anderson in 2002, following a position as the director of spiritual care at Austin State Hospital.

Schirmacher has experience with parish ministry in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and he served as a chaplain at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He represents M.D. Anderson at the regional level, serving on the Southwest Regional Accreditation Committee of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education.

The honoree says some of the most enjoyable parts of his job are "incorporating the medical humanities into education; art, literature, music, spirituality; and helping compassionate people become more successful." In his spare time, he plays clarinet in a community band and enjoys the poetry of George Herbert, John Donne, Mark Doty and Lucille Clifton.

The Staff Educator of the Year is awarded to an outstanding staff member at the conclusion of Education Week each year. The recipient is selected from 12 honorees who have received the Staff Educator of the Month award during the



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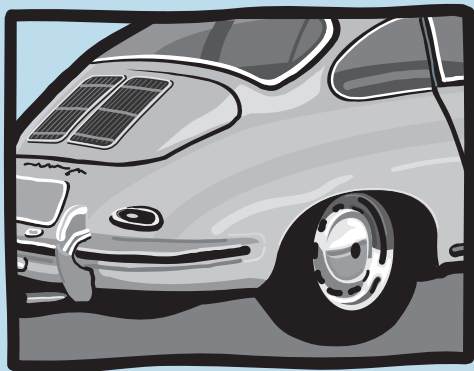
previous year. Criteria for selection include demonstration of vision, exuberance, creativity and dedication to education as it relates to the mission of M.D. Anderson.

Staff Education of the Year Award winners receive a commemorative plaque, a \$5,000 cash award and recognition in employee publications.

Article by Nancy Hill, The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center Staff

Photo by Karen Hensley, The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center Staff

"JUNKERS OR JEWELS" CAR CAMPAIGN



That old car, truck, boat w/trailer, motorcycle, or RV may have more value than you think. The Chaplaincy Fund accepts unwanted vehicles that have a clear title signed by the owner, air in the tires and an engine in the vehicle. Not only does the program help the Chaplaincy Fund carry out its mission of providing resources to enhance the spiritual care, education and research programs for the Department of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Education at M. D. Anderson, it also provides the donor with a tax deduction. To make a contribution or if you need more information call Gloria Koenning at 713-862-8482, to have your vehicle picked up free of charge.

“Oranges and a Drink”

By Chaplain Stephen Findley



Sarah was from Nigeria, 24 years old, and had leukemia. Sarah had been in the hospital for a lengthy stay of 67 days and she was not doing very well. She looked forward to my daily visits. I would sit, visit, and pray with her.

On a Thursday I arrived as usual and took a seat by her bedside. She looked over at me and asked me how I was doing. Next, she wanted to know if I would like to taste a soda drink from Nigeria. I politely refused. After all, I was the Chaplain and I had come to offer her hospitality. She persisted and so, I relented and tasted the drink. It tasted like carbonated prune juice. Sarah said, “Don you like it?” I persisted, “Yes, I do”. She said, “No, I don’t think you like it. Would you like to have an orange?” Worn down by now I said, “Yes, thank you.” Her mother who was standing

nearby gave me three oranges to take with me. We visited and she asked me to pray with her. After our prayer, I excused myself and went on to continue my rounds.

The next morning, on a Friday during morning report, I learned that Sarah had passed away in the night. The news of her death hit me hard. Tears began to flow from my eyes as I sat among my fellow chaplains. I had never been affected before by the death of a patient in the way her death affected me.

Looking back I had grown attached to her in a way that I usually don’t with all my patients. Through her faith in God I had been able to connect to her. She was also a young woman with no father, brother, or husband by her side.

Moreover, I realized that on my final visit with her as she lay dying, she had served me oranges and a drink. I as a Chaplain had come to show her hospitality and in return Sarah had served me food and drink. The last day I was with her, I held her hand for a long time after the prayer was over.

Over the weekend I felt ashamed of my tears for her as though a true Chaplain would always keep their emotions under control and not be affected by the death of a patient. On my way to work the following Monday, I thought of the story of Lazarus. When he died, the text simply says, “Jesus wept”. Then I thought, “Wait a minute!” If Jesus, the Shepherd, wept tears for the death of someone he cared for, it must be okay for the Chaplain to cry for his patients as well.

PACEM Alliance News

Mrs. Grace Gandy and Mrs. Kate Scott chaired a fund raising Tea/Fashion Show to benefit the PACEM Alliance, Guild of the Chaplaincy Fund, in the home of Sherry and Jim Smith this past March. Rebecca Matthews of “Image and Style” presented a fashion show with Shirley Allen, Connie Seger, Toni Wallingford and Mary Wharton modeling the latest styles. Plants ‘n Petals added to the occasion by donating a stunning floral arrangement in the entry hall.

The charitable gifts raised by the Guild, enable us to host an annual Christmas Eve day event for the patients and their

families, along with the staff who must be in the hospital during the holidays. Guild members provide music, and holiday food while Chaplains and Santa brighten the day for those not able to enjoy Christmas at home.

The Guild also sponsors the annual Clinical Pastoral Education Graduation Ceremony in August, furnishes flowers for the UTMDACC Chapel on special holidays, donates to the Chaplaincy Fund, and provides funding to reprint the Chaplaincy brochures along with other projects requested from the Department of Chaplaincy’s wish list. Please phone

TEA/FASHION SHOW TO BENEFIT THE PACEM ALLIANCE



Tea co-chairs Grace Gandy and Kate Scott



Rebecca Matthews with model and PACEM member Shirley Allen



Susan Rivers and Sukeelem Jara enjoy the excitement of the day.



Valerie Boesch, Irby Bair, Jeanette Cliff George visit with friends

Judith Stone at 713-461-6126 if you would like to be an underwriter for the Christmas Eve event or would like to be a volunteer to help with the PACEM Guild’s projects.

You are invited to join us. The PACEM Alliance meet the first Tuesday of each month at 1818 Bingle, Suite 100. Refreshments are served at 6:30pm and the meeting begins at 7:00pm. For more information, please call Lynn Bedner, President PACEM Alliance at 713-668-3977

COMFORTER INFORMATION

The Comforter is published by the Department of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Education at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Reverend David Jenkins
Director of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Education

Gloria Koenning
Executive Director of The Chaplaincy Fund, Inc.

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to honor loved ones,
living or deceased.

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by naming the Chaplaincy Fund, Inc.
as beneficiary in a will, trust fund, or insurance policy.

Gifts-in-kind or cash equivalent gifts...

such as property, collections, paintings,
unwanted vehicles, boat w/trailer, motorcycle,
or RV's which qualify for tax-deductions
equal to the value at time of presentation.

Volunteer time and talents
To assist with fund-raising events
or other projects of the Chaplaincy.

Contact:

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P.O. Box 691284
Houston, TX 77269-1284

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gdkfund@swbell.net
www.chaplaincyfund.org

SAVE THE DATE AND JOIN US

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

for the

**13th Annual Loving Hearts and
Caring Hands Awards Dinner**

6:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

at the

**Four Seasons Houston Hotel
1300 Lamar Street
Houston, TX**

Honoring

**Linda Lorelle
and**

Dr. John Mendelsohn

**Honorary Co-Chairs
Leon and Tensel Leach**

For more information
Please call 713-862-8482