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Couple honored for fight against cancer

Pair dedicated themselves to educating others about lymphoma

BY KIMBERLY POHL

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Cancer is no stranger to Charlene McMann-Seaman.

Her father died of lung cancer, her aunt from ovarian cancer. Her mother is a breast cancer survivor.

Nine years ago, when husband Scott was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Charlene felt enraged.

"Something triggered inside of me," Charlene recalls. "I said, 'You're not taking my husband. I'm tired of this.' I got mad."

Astounded by the lack of

information available to them at the time, the Bartlett couple began a crusade with the mission to eradicate lymphoma and educate people along the way.

The Lymphoma Research Foundation recognized their efforts at an awards dinner that drew 500 people and raised nearly \$300,000.

"It's an honor but we have not done this for tributes or recognition," says Scott, a commercial trial lawyer with Meckler, Bulger & Tilson LLP in Chicago. "We've done this to save lives. I'm blessed to be here and if we can help others



**Charlene
McMann-
Seaman**



**Scott
Seaman**

we have an obligation to do so."

In 2001, the Seamans helped start the foundation's first local chapter outside New York. The Chicago office has since raised \$2 million and served as a blueprint for others across the United States.

The cardinal event to catch on elsewhere has been the Lymphomathon, a 5K walk-run Charlene spearheaded in

2003. What began as 400 people at Montrose Harbor has turned into an annual event in 16 cities. Chicago's Lymphomathon alone brought in \$415,000 this year, bumping its five-year total to \$1.6 million.

"As lay people, we cannot cure lymphoma or develop more efficacious treatments ourselves," Charlene says. "But we can raise money and put it in the hands of medical researchers."

As president of the Chicago chapter, Charlene promotes public awareness and education as much as fundraising. She encourages letter writing and contacting elected officials at their local offices about spending more money on cancer research.

Lymphoma is a general

term for a group of cancers of the lymphatic system, which is part of the body's immune system. There are two basic categories: Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's.

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 20,000 people in the United States die of lymphoma each year.

"It deserves to get more publicity," says Scott, who's doing well.

The Chicago chapter has developed a database that pairs newly diagnosed lymphoma patients with survivors.

And on Thursday, the chapter is putting on a free "Ask the Doctor" event at Northwestern University's Chicago campus. The program will provide patients, survivors

and their supporters with overviews on lymphoma, treatment options and research updates.

"Some people have no clue about treatment or even which kind of lymphoma they have," Scott says.

Joan Mistrough, vice president of development for the national foundation, said the Seamans have been important contributors to the growth and vitality of the Chicago chapter.

"We are all deeply indebted to them for their relentless devotion to LRF and its mission to eradicate lymphoma and serve those touched by this disease," she said from her New York office.

For more information, go to the foundation's Web site, lymphoma.org.