



An Evening of  
*Hope & Gratitude*

# IMPACT REPORT



CANCER HOPE NETWORK

## 2026 Annual Golf and Pickleball Classic

Tuesday, September 22, 2026

Crestmont Country Club  
750 Eagle Rock Ave.  
West Orange, NJ 07052



# Thank You for Supporting Hope



## Dear Friends of Cancer Hope Network,

Thank you. Because of your generosity, this year's CHN Golf & Pickleball Classic was the most successful ever, and we exceeded our revenue goal. When I look at that result, I see an investment in people. Your support keeps our one-on-one peer mentorship program accessible and free for every person facing cancer and caregiver who reaches out to us.

A cancer diagnosis brings a team of doctors, nurses, and specialists focused on treating the disease. What it rarely brings is someone who knows what it feels like to sit in that waiting room, or to lie awake the night before a scan. That is the gap our program fills. In my experience, hope rarely comes from a pamphlet or a statistic. It comes from hearing someone say, "I was where you are, and here's what helped me." Supportive care like this makes a meaningful difference in quality of life, and it is essential to the wellbeing of patients and caregivers alike.

That hope has names. Names like Jim Gano, CHN Peer Mentor and 2026 Michael Kzirian Flame of Courage Award honoree. Jim is one of our 700+ trained Peer Mentors, all cancer survivors and caregivers, who give their time and share their stories so someone else can feel seen and understood.

None of this happens without you. Thank you for showing up on the course, on the courts, in the ballroom, and for the people we serve. The pages that follow show what your generosity makes possible.

With gratitude,

***Beth A. Blakey***

Chief Executive Officer, Cancer Hope Network

“The most meaningful part has been providing support to people during one of the most difficult periods in their lives.”

— E.T., [CHN Mentor]

## EVENT AT A GLANCE

# The 2026 Annual Classic Surpassed Every Expectation



On September 22nd, golfers, pickleball players, sponsors, volunteers, and banquet guests came together at Crestmont Country Club for the 31st Annual CHN Golf & Pickleball Classic. Together, we made it the most successful golf classic in Cancer Hope Network's history and exceeded our goal.

# 31

years of the CHN  
Golf Classic.

# Goal exceeded

thanks to our sponsors,  
players, and guests.

# 400+

complete mentor  
matches funded.



## HIGHLIGHTS

# A Day Worth Celebrating

Golf, Pickleball, and the Flame of Courage Awards Banquet came together at Crestmont Country Club, and the day delivered from the first tee shot to the final farewell.

### Golf Champions:

- 1st Place: Beth Hardy, Jack Higgins, Joel Liebowitz, Sam Liebowitz
- 2nd Place: Kevin Conklyn, Mark Krisinski, Kevin Reed, Kyle Harvey
- 3rd Place: Maplecrest Ford Lincoln



### Pickleball Champions:

- 1st Place: Karen Baicker
- 2nd Place: Richard Stohlman



### Contest Hole Winners

- Longest Drive, Hole 9, sponsored by TMGOC: Maplecrest Ford Lincoln
- Closest to the Pin, Hole #4 and #17, sponsored by Double Eagle: Frank O'Brien and Josh Braen



### Silent Auction Standouts:

New York Jets Coaches Club tickets, a Crystal Springs Golf Experience & Getaway, and a Chappellet Wine Club membership led the bidding.

*Every serve, swing, and dollar raised became something bigger.*

## WHAT YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES POSSIBLE

# From Every Swing to a Lasting Connection

Our mentors give their time, and our program is free for every patient and caregiver we serve. Each gift funds everything around that time: thoughtful matching, rigorous training, and ongoing support, so every conversation is a safe place to land. Here is what giving at each level makes possible:

**\$35**

### **One hour of peer support**

A mentor call that can change someone's entire week.

**\$100**

### **The first weeks of a new connection**

Nearly three hours of one-on-one support in the weeks right after a diagnosis, often the hardest stretch of all.

**\$250**

### **A strong start for someone newly diagnosed**

Intake, matching, and the early months of support for someone just beginning to navigate cancer.

**\$325**

### **One complete mentor match**

Connects one patient or caregiver with a trained mentor and supports that relationship from start to finish.

**\$1,000**

### **Three new connections**

About three complete matches, plus the mentor training that makes each one possible.

**\$10,000**

### **Reach that grows**

About 30 complete matches, and the recruiting and training that expands our national network of mentors.

*Gift equivalents are based on CHN's cost per mentor match and the Independent Sector's 2025 value of volunteer time (\$36.14 per hour).*

### **A Year of New Connections:**

Because of our community's generosity, more people facing cancer or caring for a loved one will be matched with a peer mentor in the year ahead.

**“** *I just love my mentor. She is so caring and feels we relate 'cause she truly understands my concerns. She has helped me so much with my anxiety level. I hope after this is done I can support someone.”*

**— T.G., [CHN Mentee]**

## OUR MENTORS

# Hope Is Best Shared By Someone Who's Been There.

Cancer Hope Network provides free, one-on-one peer mentorship to people facing cancer and those who love them. We match each person with a trained survivor or caregiver mentor who has lived through a similar diagnosis, treatment, or caregiving experience.

**700+**

trained survivor and caregiver mentors

**120+**

cancer types and subtypes represented

**19–84**

ages served

**16+**

languages spoken

**60,000**

individuals served



A mentor doesn't replace a care team and isn't meant to. Doctors and nurses treat the disease. Mentors meet people in the places clinical care can't reach: the worry that shows up at 2 a.m., the questions that feel too small to bring to an appointment, and the relief of talking to someone who understands without needing it explained. That kind of support makes a meaningful difference in quality of life for patients and caregivers alike.

**One of those 700+ mentors is our 2026 Michael Kzirian  
Flame of Courage Award honoree, Jim Gano.**

# Not Done Yet

*How Jim Gano Turned a Multiple Myeloma Diagnosis into Hope for Others*

STORY BY // CANCER HOPE NETWORK



When Jim Gano was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, he felt the world around him shift almost overnight. The way people saw him changed, and so did the questions in front of him: What happens next? What has to change? What will life look like now?

His diagnosis came during the COVID-19 pandemic, when visits from loved ones were limited and the usual circle of support was hard to reach. Without it, Jim leaned on something he would later pass on to others: mindset. He found guidance in a simple idea from author Simon Sinek, “figure out your why,” and held onto the things that gave him purpose and a reason to look ahead.

“There’s different ways of looking at cancer. For me it was more like it’s a journey. I have to keep moving forward, keep living life.”

— Jim Gano

## FINDING CONNECTION

Talking with other patients helped Jim make sense of his own experience. Comparing stories, treatments, and perspectives showed him how much reassurance comes from someone who truly understands. During treatment, a social worker and nurse practitioner saw that his outlook could help others and introduced him to Cancer Hope Network. After finishing treatment, Jim reached out, completed training, and became a CHN Peer Mentor.

Today he mentors 13 people across the country, many of them also navigating multiple myeloma. For Jim, the most valuable thing he can offer is taking the fear out of the experience, so each person feels more prepared for what lies ahead.

“One of the greatest things that comes out of this... is removing the fear from the patient.”  
— Jim Gano

### SHARING HIS STORY

Jim also shares his experience on the page. His book, *I’m Not Done Yet*, chronicles his diagnosis and the lessons he learned through treatment. Word of mouth carried it well beyond its first readers, and messages from people who found encouragement in it, including some sharing their own stories of remission, inspired him to keep writing. A fourth book is now in the works.

### A NIGHT OF RECOGNITION

On September 22nd, Cancer Hope Network presented Jim with the Michael Kzirian Flame of Courage Award in front of our community at Crestmont Country Club. Fittingly, Jim’s company, Crown Trophy, also produced this year’s golf, pickleball, and Flame of Courage awards. Jim called the honor unique and very humbling, and “an affirmation that what I’m doing... is important enough to keep going.”

For Jim, the award is bigger than his own story. It belongs to everyone who has faced cancer and then turned around to help the next person through it.



Read more of Jim’s story at [cancerhopenetwork.org/impact-stories](https://cancerhopenetwork.org/impact-stories)

### SIGNATURE AWARD

## About the Michael Kzirian Flame of Courage Award

Named in honor of Cancer Hope Network’s late board member, supporter, and dear friend, the Michael Kzirian Flame of Courage Award is presented annually to an individual who has made a profound difference in the lives of people impacted by cancer. The award honors those who have faced their own cancer experience with courage, as well as those who choose to walk beside others through it.

#### Recent Former Recipients:

2025 — Terry Kelly  
2024 — Jeremy Kaye  
2023 — Claudio Pannunzio  
2022 — Gregory Blessing  
2021 — William Stake

# 2026 Event Committee & Sponsors

## EVENT COMMITTEE

William Burke, Committee Chairperson • Terri-Ann Feindt, CHN Board Chairperson • Beth Blakey, CHN Chief Executive Officer  
Carly Cheponis • Kevin Conklyn • Nancy Goodman • Jeremy Kaye • Harry McEnroe • Aaron Nietfeld • Robert Tarleton

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## UNDERWRITERS

*Breakfast/Brunch:* New York Plumbing • *Cocktail Reception:* Prager Metis • *Beverage Cart:* First Hope Bank  
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***SPECIAL THANKS to our silent auction donors, volunteers, and the team at Crestmont Country Club.***

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We honor the dedicated staff, volunteers, and supporters whose compassion continues to bring hope to so many.

With appreciation and gratitude,

Helene Elbaum,  
Managing Director,  
Sales Associate

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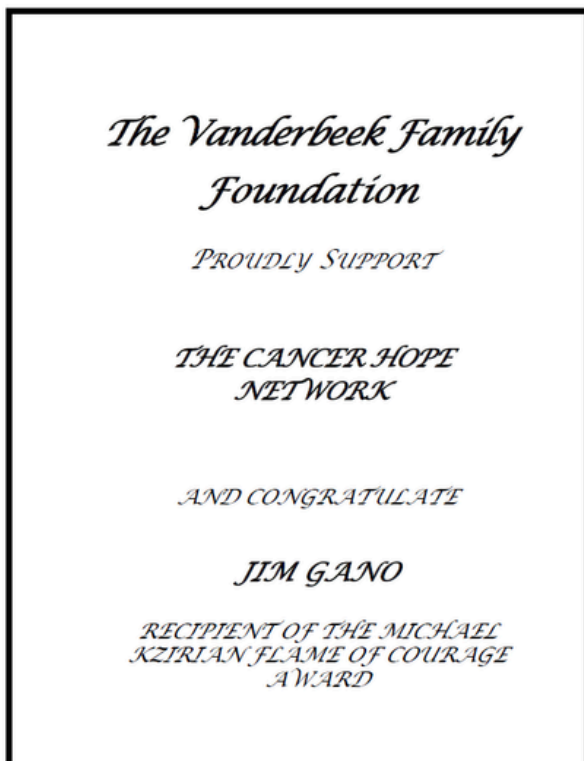
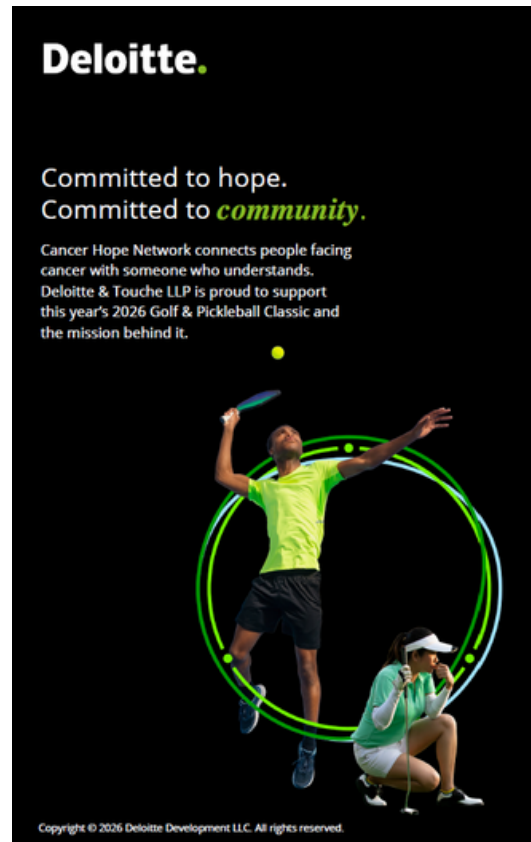
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## BEYOND THE EVENT

# Keep the Connection Going

The generosity you showed on September 22nd doesn't have to end with the event. Help make more stories like Jim's possible by visiting [cancerhopenetwork.org/donate-now](https://cancerhopenetwork.org/donate-now) or scanning the QR code to support CHN year-round.



**Aaron Nietfeld, Director of Development**

[anietfeld@cancerhopenetwork.org](mailto:anietfeld@cancerhopenetwork.org) | Direct 908.613.8221

*Until there's a cure, there's connection.*



Cancer Hope Network is a 501(C)(3) Nonprofit registered in the US under EIN: 22-2647316

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