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Those who Give: The Kristen Olewine Milke Breast Cancer Research Fund

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When Kristen Olewine Milke, a Harrisburg native, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003, she sought the best place to have her surgery. Her nephew, a surgeon at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, told her she would receive excellent care at Jefferson, and she soon became the patient of breast surgeon Dr. Ronald Weigel (currently the Head of Surgery at the University of Iowa) and Clinical Associate Professor Steven Copit, MD, who performed her reconstructive surgery.

“I became very close to the doctors who treated me,” says Ms. Olewine Milke. “This was before the Breast Care Center had been formalized, but I received that same thoughtful, coordinated care—where the oncologists, surgeons, chemotherapy treatments, and nursing care were all seamless. I realized I wanted to do more, to have an impact on others’ lives.”

Ms. Olewine Milke learned about the breast cancer research that Dr. Weigel was then doing, a role assumed today by Susan Lanza-Jacoby, PhD. Her work includes investigating the possible role of diet as well as nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like aspirin and ibuprofen on reducing the risk of breast cancer. “I am deeply honored that Kristen continues to support surgical research, seven years after she became my patient,” says Dr. Copit. “Her generosity will affect how we treat breast cancer patients in years to come.”

“It’s great to be able to support the ongoing research in the department,” she says, “especially given how hard it is for researchers to find funding today. I don’t have the skills to be a researcher myself,” she continues, “but it seems only right to try to help, out of gratitude for the good care I received.”

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Ms. Olewine Milke and her father, Benjamin Olewine, III, work together to support philanthropic causes that have special meaning for the family, including children's medicine, wildlife conservation, education and the arts. Over many decades, Mr. Olewine transformed the Harrisburg grocery store his father had started into a food distribution company that was ultimately bought by the Sysco Corporation. He turns 89 years old in October and continues to go to the office each day. Ms. Olewine Milke was Senior Vice President of Sysco Food Services of Central Pennsylvania until 2005, when she retired to devote herself full-time to philanthropic work.

Jefferson is still involved in Ms. Olewine Milke's care seven years later. “Were I to need surgery again, I would seek out Dr. Copit first and foremost,” she says. “In the mean time, I’m glad to support Jefferson in seeking the best possible ways to meet the needs of breast cancer patients.”

For additional information about planned giving, or to make a contribution to the Department of Surgery, please contact Lara Goldstein in the Jefferson Foundation at 215.955.8797 or email lara.goldstein@jefferson.edu
The Kristen Olewine Milke Breast Cancer Research Fund

When Kristen Olewine Milke, a Harrisburg native, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003, she sought the best place to have her surgery. Her nephew, a surgeon at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, told her she would receive excellent care at Jefferson, and she soon became the patient of breast surgeon Dr. Ronald Weigel (currently the Head of Surgery at the University of Iowa) and Clinical Associate Professor Steven Copit, MD, who performed her reconstructive surgery. “I became very close to the doctors who treated me,” Ms. Olewine Milke says. “Dr. Loyd Weigel was then doing, a role assumed today by Susan Lanza-Jacob, PhD. Her work includes the breast cancer research that Olewine Milke’s care seven years after she became my patient,” he says. “I am deeply honored that Kristen continues to support philanthropic causes that have special meaning for the family. I feel that I would seek out Dr. Copit first and foremost,” she says. “In the mean time, I am glad to support Jefferson in seeking the best possible ways to meet the needs of breast cancer patients.”

The Kristen Olewine Milke Breast Cancer Research Fund is the only breast cancer research fund at Jefferson University Hospital. Its primary focus will be endocrine surgery. Dr. Koenig recently completed a fellowship in Critical Care at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. He will provide care at both Jefferson University Hospital and the outreach programs at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Stacey Milan, MD, a 2009 graduate of the residency program, has joined the Division of General Surgery. Dr. Milan recently completed a fellowship in Endocrine Surgery at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Her primary focus will be endocrine surgery.

Atul S. Rao, MD, a 2008 graduate of the residency program, was recently named the Director of the Endocrine Surgery at Jefferson University Hospital. His primary focus will be endocrine surgery.

Jonathan Brody, PhD, has been named the Director of the Division of Surgical Research. His research focuses on pancreatic cancer and targeted therapies.

Nicolaus Cavoukian, MD, FACS, has joined the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. Most recently, he served as Director of the Heart Transplant Program and the Co-Director of the Heart and Vascular Intensive Care Unit at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. He will serve as the Director of the Surgical Critical Care Unit.

Dr. Steven Copit, Eugene Kennedy, and Francis Rosato, Jr., each received the Dean’s Award for Excellence in Education and Donald Isenberg and Barry Mann received the Dean’s Citation for Faculty Mentoring at this year’s Faculty Awards Dinner.

George J. Kooning Jr., DO, has joined the Division of Acute Care Surgery. Dr. Kooning recently completed a fellowship as Critical Care and Acute Care Surgery at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He will provide care at both Jefferson University Hospital and the outreach programs at University Hospital.

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