

2024 Arizona Bioscience Service Award: Jack and Barbara Kavanagh

A 33-YEAR CANCER JOURNEY BENEFITS PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Jack and Barbara Kavanagh, founders of the Arizona Myeloma Network and Cancer Caregivers of America, will be honored with the AZBio Service Award at the 20th annual AZBio Awards on September 18, 2024, at the Phoenix Convention Center.

In June of 2024, Jack Kavanagh's 33-year journey with Multiple Myeloma ended. His experience living with cancer, and his wife Barbara Kavanagh's journey by his side as a cancer caregiver formed the basis of their mission to provide education and support to others who are on their own cancer journeys.

Jack and Barbara Kavanagh had each other and the support of some of the leading cancer researchers and care teams in the country, but they also saw so many others around them who were struggling.

A person is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis through the balance of life, according to the National Cancer Institute. NIH data reports that in 2022 there were over 18.1 million cancer survivors in the United States. This represents approximately 5.4% of the population. The number of cancer survivors is projected to grow to 26.0 million by 2040.

With 53 million adults serving as unpaid caregivers in the United States, the importance of examining the challenges caregivers face is essential. Caregivers of people diagnosed with cancer, estimated to be more than 6 million, have additional economic and well-being risks relative to caregivers of other adult patients.

Based on their experience and with the encouragement of leading cancer experts, Jack and Barbara embarked on a mission beginning 25 years ago.



SERVANT LEADER: Barbara B. Kavanagh is the founder and CEO of Arizona Myeloma Network (AzMN). (Provided photo)

They co-founded the Arizona Myeloma Network to provide patients and caregivers with education and support that can help to navigate a cancer diagnosis and its effects on the patient, caregiver, family and community.

In 2023, the Online Cancer Caregivers Education Program launched. CCEP® has received praise from City of Hope, Pfizer, Users, and others who recognize the impact the education, access to resources, and support provided in the program can have on patients and caregivers.

Developed with leading professionals in the oncology space along with patients and cancer caregivers, the CCEP has three primary functions all housed on a platform

designed for the caregivers AND patients including:

1. Interactive and engaging education modules that focus on skill development.
2. Access to a repository of resources housed in the Cancer Care Resource Library.
3. Access to a national Cancer Care Community where patients and caregivers find support.

Jack and Barbara developed the program to help millions of patients and families, including and especially those in the underserved populations such as Native Americans and others in rural areas of the country. They worked together on it every day up until the day that an aneurism brought Jack's cancer journey to a close.

Shortly before his death, Jack Kavanagh wrote: "Our goal is to provide knowledge and skills for the caregiver and patient so that the gaps between research and development, the administration of treatment therapies by healthcare professionals, and the impact to patients once they are home is closed. Only then we will have a complete understanding of how best to treat, heal, and cure cancer."

Today, Barbara Kavanagh, through Cancer Caregivers of America, is continuing the mission and Jack's legacy.

"The education and support provided by the healthcare professionals delivering treatment therapies to cancer patients are exceptional. Unfortunately, education and support for the cancer caregivers who are providing critical care at home are virtually nonexistent. While we as a nation have come a long way over the past few years regarding providing information and access to resources for our caregivers, we still have a long way to go," she says. "And we know we can help." **AB**