

AWARE!

*Leeper Builds for Tomorrow
with New Expansion Project Underway*

BIG CHANGES AHEAD

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center has officially broken ground on an exciting, three-phase building expansion designed to improve both the patient experience and the care we provide to our community.

PHASE 1: More Room, More Comfort

Construction is underway on a new first-floor expansion to create the J. Robert and Mary H. Farr Patient Navigation Center. This phase will double our conference space, with a flexible wall arrangement, and create two new offices behind the library. It will also add a second floor that will house a brand-new infusion space for the Trinity Health of New England Oncology Center — designed with patient comfort, privacy, and care in mind.

PHASE 2: A Fresh Look for Common Spaces

The second phase, happening alongside Phase 1, will refresh and brighten the common areas on both the first and second floors, creating a more welcoming space for patients and families.

The Reflections Boutique and Meditation Center are being relocated to make room for a stunning new waiting area with floor-to-ceiling glass and direct views of Leever's gardens. The named bricks are being relocated from their previous position by the building entrance and are being incorporated into a curved wall in the garden.

Outside, the canopy over the walkway to the entrance is being extended, expanding the covered area where patients can stand, sheltered from the rain or sun, as they wait to be picked up.

PHASE 3: Modernizing Behind the Scenes

The final phase will focus on updating our central plant systems, including replacing HVAC units and boilers. While less visible, these upgrades are essential for efficiency, reliability, and ensuring our facilities meet modern standards.

Members of the Farr family, whose generosity made this expansion

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Below: Mary Ann Cordeau, PhD, RN (right) representing the Farr family, with Ryan Ducki, project architect from Studio Q Architects.



Leever Builds for Tomorrow with New Expansion... Continued from page 1



Matt Leone, Project Superintendent of A/Z Corp., the construction company for Phases 1 and 2 of our expansion.

possible, recently toured the building with our architects to provide their input. Their vision aligns with ours: a space that better supports patients, families, and the community.

“Our family is so excited to see the progress already taking shape at Leever,” said Mary Ann Cordeau, PhD, RN, of the Farr family. “We wanted to create spaces that feel welcoming, supportive, and truly patient-friendly. Seeing the expansion come to life — especially areas that will provide comfort to patients and their families — means a great deal to us. We are grateful to be part of a project that will benefit this community for years to come.”

Throughout construction, Leever will remain open and committed to delivering the same compassionate, high-quality care you expect. This project is not just about bricks and mortar — it’s about creating a better healing environment for every patient and family who walks through our doors.



ASK THE DOC

David Hill, MD, FCCP Director of Clinical Research at Waterbury Pulmonary Associates

Why is smoking bad for our health, and how can quitting smoking reduce your risk of cancer?

Dr. Hill: We’ve known that smoking is bad for our health for more than 50 years. The first Surgeon General’s report on smoking and lung cancer came out in 1964. Smoking is obviously bad for our health because of lung cancer risk, but it’s bad for our health for a variety of reasons. We see increases in chronic lung disease, asthma, and COPD in smokers, and we see worsening cardiovascular disease, which means increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Smoking is also associated with other cancers, such as head and neck and bladder cancers. The most important way to reduce cancer risk related to smoking is if you don’t smoke, don’t start, and if you do smoke, talk with your healthcare providers about the best options for quitting. And it’s never too late to stop. Even if you’ve done damage by smoking, the sooner you stop, the less damage you’ll do. Each person needs to find the method that works best for them.



LISTEN NOW! Scan the QR code above to listen to our latest podcast, “Conquer Quitting: Breaking Free from Nicotine,” with Dr. David Hill, as he discusses the significant health benefits of smoking cessation as well as the various options available to help individuals quit.

DON’T MISS IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS!

Catch up with all of our podcasts with local experts in the **LEEVER CANCER CONVERSATIONS** series. All episodes listed below are available now in our podcast library. To listen, scan the QR code below or visit leevercancercenter.org/video-library/leever-cancer-conversations-podcasts.

- EPISODE 1: Colorectal Cancer** with John Zhang, MD, PhD, FACS, FASCRS
- EPISODE 2: Genetic Counseling & Testing** with Yvonne Ruddy-Stein, APRN, AGN-BC
- EPISODE 3: Breast Cancer** with Elizabeth Riordan, MD
- EPISODE 4: “Ann’s Place” Support Groups** with Debbie Mendez, ATR-P, LPC-A
- EPISODE 5: Prostate Cancer Conversation** with Sagar Phatak, MD
- EPISODE 6: Lung Cancer Conversation** with David Hill, MD, FCCP
- EPISODE 7: Dupuytren’s Contracture Conversation** with Joseph Ravalese, III, MD



SPOTLIGHT ON: STUDIO Q ARCHITECTURE

Since 2018, the team at Studio Q Architecture has been working closely with us at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center. Their most recent project is a comprehensive refresh that will transform the HLRCC to better reflect its mission of healing, hope, and community.

A typical “refresh” usually involves surface changes like changing paint and furnishings, but when Leever asked Studio Q to help refine their ability to serve their patients, the project quickly grew into a larger vision. “We took the opportunity that was really just a refresh and dug into how much the facility reflects the mission,” explained Ron Quicquaro, Principal Architect, AIA, LEED AP. “Obviously, the cancer care and staff are exceptional — they are some of the best in the region, if not the world. We wanted the facility to reflect that.”

That vision began outside the building, with a new modern steel canopy, raised crosswalk, and renovated healing gardens. “We really studied the patient’s experience from the moment they drive onto the campus,” said Ron. “The whole entrance sequence was designed to reinforce the mission. Creating a situation where patients feel like they have finally arrived is very important because it changes your mindset. There is a whole psychology that happens: you feel like, ‘Ahh, I am here, I am being taken care of.’”

Studio Q’s design was inspired in part by HLRCC’s flame logo. “We studied the symbolism in the logo—flame, healing, motion — and started to develop an aesthetic that was threaded throughout every decision,” said Ron.

Ryan Ducki, AIA, a Project Architect at Studio Q, emphasized the importance of natural light and openness. “In the existing building, your arrival stops when you get inside the door. You’re immediately in a corridor. There is no sense of arrival once you walk through that door,” he said. “Opening up exterior walls with all glass — that visual connection is so important. Each of these details is important. For it to be successful, we have to look at every single space, how they feel, what they do with the space and the environment.”

Attention to detail even extended to lighting design. “Every light has a different level of warmth,” Ron explained. “Ryan studies all these light sources to determine which is the most natural — which mimics natural daylight to make you feel better.”

The redesign also introduces new spaces for comfort and reflection. What is now the Meditation Center will become a Serenity Suite, offering a space for visitors to pray,



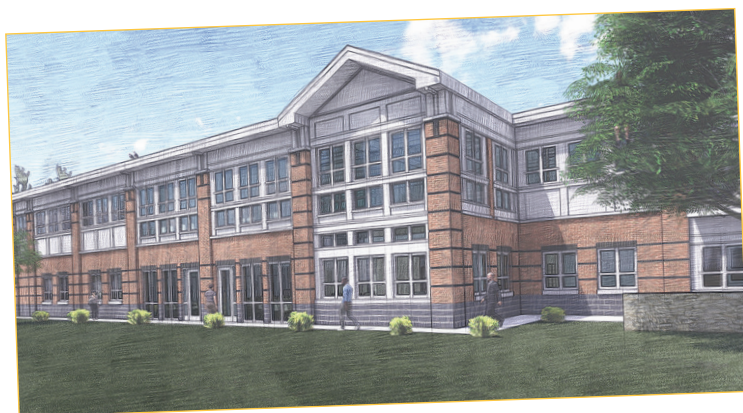
Obviously, the cancer care and staff are exceptional — they are some of the best in the region, if not the world. We wanted the facility to reflect that.”

Ron Quicquaro (below right),
Principal Architect, AIA, LEED AP
Studio Q Architecture



Visual connection is so important.”

Ryan Ducki (above left),
Project Architect, AIA,
Studio Q Architecture



Above: Studio Q Architecture’s vision of the HLRCC exterior expansion.

contemplate, discuss, accept, or just sit with a loved one. The new suite will be equipped with sound and projection technology that will mimic different environments. “You’ll actually feel like you are in a different place — in the woods with birds chirping or at the beach with gently cresting waves,” Ron explained. “There are a few environments that will be available.”

Through thoughtful details and patient-centered design, Studio Q has helped HLRCC transform its physical environment into one that fully mirrors the care provided within. “Leever drove the whole vision,” said Ron. “Our role was to take that vision and push it further — to ensure every element reinforces their mission of healing, hope, and community.”

Teaming Up for Closer to Free Ride 2025

HLRCC Joins Forces with Smilow’s “Rays of Hope” Cyclists

On September 6, 2025, HLRCC proudly participated in the 15th Annual Closer to Free Ride as part of the Smilow Waterbury “Rays of Hope” team, joining hundreds of riders in support of cancer research and patient care at Smilow Cancer Hospital and Yale Cancer Center. Our very own Deborah Parkinson, Interim Executive Director/Operations Director, participated in the event. Thanks to the dedication of our riders and the generosity of donors, the team helped raise \$37,499 toward our goal of \$50,000 —funds that will directly support programs and research aimed at improving the lives of cancer patients and their families. We extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who rode, donated, or cheered on the team (some are pictured below).



ASSESS YOUR CANCER RISK WITH A NEW ACS ONLINE TOOL

Do you know your cancer risk? Now there’s an easy way to find out what might be affecting your personal cancer risk — and what steps you can take to lower it.

The American Cancer Society’s CancerRisk360 is a free online assessment available to anyone 18 or older, regardless of your history of cancer. It shows how lifestyle factors like tobacco use, diet, physical activity, body weight, HPV vaccination, and sun protection influence your risk. The tool also considers factors beyond your control, such as age and family history, and highlights the importance of staying up to date with recommended cancer screenings.

To take the CancerRisk360 assessment, visit leevercancercenter.org/care-services/cancer-screening.



We are proud to share that **Elizabeth Rinehart, MD**, a pathologist and member of HLRCC’s multidisciplinary teams, has been named a 2025 Cancer Liaison Physician Outstanding Performance Award winner by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer.

We congratulate Dr. Rinehart and thank her for her tireless work to improve cancer care in our community.

In Tune WITH TIFFANY



We are very excited to welcome singer and musician **Tiffany Zhang** (daughter of local colorectal cancer expert Dr. John Zhang) to The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center for “In Tune with Tiffany,” a series of live musical performances designed to create an uplifting atmosphere and bring joy to our patients, visitors, and staff.

Tiffany will be performing every other Wednesday at 2:00 PM in the main lobby. Don’t miss the opportunity to experience live musical moments for reflection and connection right here in our community! Check our website for specific dates.



MYTHS: WHAT'S TRUE



“I read it on the internet, so it HAS to be true! My cousin/friend/parent/co-worker told me that if I did this, then my cancer would be cured.”

With all the information and misinformation available, it is easy to misinterpret what you read, unless you do your own research to examine the actual evidence that supports the claims.

Here are eight common myths that have become very popular:

MYTH 1: Sugar feeds cancer.

Truth: Every cell in the body requires sugar or glucose (blood sugar) to function. If sugar/glucose is not available, our bodies make it from other sources, like protein (muscle) or fat. Eliminating dietary sugar does not eliminate it from our bodies. The most important thing is to limit added sugar (soda, excessive sweets, for example) to prevent weight gain, which may increase cancer risk.

MYTH 2: Honey, brown sugar, raw sugar, maple syrup and agave are healthier than white sugar.

Truth: Although there are subtle differences between these sugars, your body cannot tell the difference and metabolizes them similarly. Excess amounts of these sugars add excess calories, which can lead to weight gain. Many ultra-processed foods contain manmade high fructose corn syrup which is unhealthy and can result in excessive calorie intake and inflammation in the body.

MYTH 3: A detox diet cleanses toxins from your body.

Truth: Popular “detox diets” usually involve some type of fasting, eating from a limited choice of foods, exces-

sive fluids or taking enemas or laxatives. There is no scientific evidence to show the need or benefit of detoxification diets. Your body comes with its own set of detoxing organs: your liver, kidneys and intestines. The best way to “detox” your body is to eat a plant-based diet with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, lean proteins and minimal ultra-processed foods.

MYTH 4: Superfoods will keep you healthy.

Truth: Contrary to what you read, there is no single “superfood” that will prevent cancer or any other chronic disease. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables of many colors, plus a plant-based diet, is the best way to get the many advantages of the phytonutrients in our food.

MYTH 5: The only healthy fruits and vegetables are fresh ones.

Truth: Although fresh produce is healthy, some frozen, canned and dried varieties can be just as healthy, and are often more cost-effective. However, watch out for added sugar in some dried fruits.

Adhering to a plant-based diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, and lean proteins, while avoiding excess sugar and ultra-processed foods, is the best way to stay healthy and lower the risk of chronic disease, including cancer.

MYTH 6:

Plant milk is healthier than cow/dairy milk.

Truth: Cow’s milk has 8 grams of protein per cup. Plant-based milks, like almond, oat and rice, are primarily flavored water, and contain minimal protein. They can also have added ingredients like sugar and sodium. If you have an aversion or allergy to milk, make sure that your alternate choices are nutritionally comparable.

MYTH 7:

Drinking caffeinated tea or coffee causes dehydration.

Truth: All fluids can be dehydrating, whether they contain caffeine or not. Studies have shown that urine production is the same with water or coffee. So, you can count your coffee toward your fluid intake. Keep in mind that adding excessive amounts of fat and sugar to coffee is unhealthy and can pack on the calories.

MYTH 8:

Vitamins and herbal supplements are healthy and harmless.

Truth: Supplements that you take are really unregulated medications that can interfere with other prescriptions or chemotherapy. There are instances when supplements are appropriate, especially if there is a documented deficiency. Let your doctors know what you are taking and how much.

Nutrition Notes is authored by Leever Nutritionist Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO (ksabbath@leevercancercenter.org or 203-575-5510).

A Community of Caring

FUNKY MUSIC WITH A MISSION On the evening of August 27th, **Robert D'Angelo**, a resident of **Chatfield Farms in Beacon Falls**, together with his wife **Jeanne** and the band he belongs to, **Bales & Gitlin Music**, held a fundraiser to benefit HLRCC.

Mr. D'Angelo, a cancer survivor who was treated at HLRCC, spearheaded this event with the help of the Chatfield Farms events committee. Many people wore '60s and '70s themed attire to go along with the music played that evening. Deborah Parkinson, HLRCC Interim Executive Director/Operations Director, was honored to speak at the event about HLRCC and how donations are used. Over 90 couples and families gave donations totaling over \$6,500!

A DECADE OF SUPPORT We extend our sincere gratitude to the **Watertown Police Department**, which held its 10th annual "Teeing Off for the Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center" Golf Tournament on October 3, 2025.

Over the past nine years, this event has raised more than \$160,000 to benefit Leever patients, helping them access world-class treatment and supportive care.



HEARTFELT THANKS...

to **Cathy Conti** (second from left) and the **Jewish Federation** for coordinating the creation of comfort bags for HLRCC patients. The bags were gratefully accepted by our staff. Your care and generosity truly make a difference!



BLANKETS AND BIG HEARTS Thank you to **Premier Subaru of Middlebury** once again for the wonderful cozy blankets. Your continued support goes a long way in bringing warmth and comfort to our patients.



GRAZIE MILLE, UNICO!

We're grateful for the generous support from UNICO National of Waterbury, the largest Italian American service organization in the nation. **Annette Petruzzi** (center) presented the donation.

As always, all of us at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center are immensely grateful for the contributions from our community, including all who created handmade or donated other items for our patients:

- **Noemi Bond** • **Mary Jackson**
- **Dolores Milo** • **Mary Ann Barone**
- **Beacon Falls Senior Center**
- **The Knitting Group at North Congregational Church, Woodbury**
- **Karyn Holden and David Ebreo**

aware!

NEWLETTER
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We welcome your feedback!
If there's a cancer-related topic you'd like us to cover, if you'd like to share your thoughts on an article, or to join our mailing list, please call us at:
203-575-5555
or email:
dparkinson@leevercancercenter.org



Monthly Support Groups

IMPORTANT TO KNOW: The Leever Center is undergoing a transformation process as we update and expand our building to better serve our patients. During this time, there will be some changes to our monthly support groups.

The following groups are on hold till further notice: Greater Waterbury Area Ostomy Support Group and Living with Stage 4/Incurable Cancer Support Group.

ART THERAPY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Second and fourth Tuesday of every month
3:30 - 5:00 PM

Location: Family & Children's Aid ♦♦
30 Holmes Avenue, Waterbury

To register, call 203-790-6568 x109 or email
clientservices@annsplace.org.

BRAVE AT HEART: WOMEN'S BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

First Wednesday of every month
7:00 - 9:00 PM

Location: Jesse Camille's, Naugatuck
For more information, please contact
Sue Ascencao: 203-232-3026 or
sasencao@yahoo.com.

HOPE MUTUAL AID GROUP FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

First and third Tuesday of every month 4:00 - 5:00 PM

Location: HLRCC PET Reception Area ♦♦

For more information, please contact Melissa Seres, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C: 203-575-5511 or
mseres@leevercancercenter.org.

♦♦ Please note new meeting location

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Second Thursday of every month
6:30 - 9:00 PM

Location: HLRCC Main Lobby ♦♦

For more information, please contact
Kathy Daisey: 203-723-5067 or
Sharon Burns: 860-384-1398.

CT MULTIPLE MYELOMA FIGHTERS SUPPORT GROUP

Second Wednesday of every month
6:00 - 8:00 PM

Location: Prospect Library

For more information, please contact
Robin Tuohy: 203-206-3536.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

For programs providing
support and information:
211 or 211.org

Direct numbers for specific resources:

Domestic violence
888-774-2900 English
844-831-9200 Spanish

Suicide
866-794-0021 Greater Waterbury

Child abuse
800-842-2288

Crisis hotline for young adults
Text "listen" to 741741

Elder abuse
888-385-4225

Sexual assault
888-999-5545 English
888-568-8332 Spanish

Veterans crisis hotline
800-273-8255 and press 1
Text: 838255

or veteranscrisisline.net
Alcoholics Anonymous
866-783-7712 English or ct-aa.org

Narcotics Anonymous
800-662-4357/800-420-9064
ctna.org

**National Alliance of
Mental Health (NAMI)**
800-215-3021

Food resources
ctfoodbank.org
(Local food pantries can be
looked up by zip code)

ARE YOU A BREAST CANCER PATIENT?

Ask for your free **CARE RESOURCES** patient binder at the radiation front desk on the ground floor.

Provided by The Breast Center of Greater Waterbury, this guide contains valuable resources and information to help face breast cancer with knowledge, strength and support... all in one place.

