

aware!

A New Home for Patient Support

The J. Robert and Mary H. Farr Patient Navigation Center opens its doors to a new era of guidance and resources.

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center recently celebrated the completion of the new J. Robert and Mary H. Farr Patient Navigation Center, a significant addition that expands resources for patients, families, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and the Greater Waterbury community.

Made possible through a generous bequest from the Farr family, the new center reflects their wish that the gift be used to support the care of cancer patients.

The project includes a renovated library and a greatly expanded conference area designed to accommodate a wide range of cancer-related programs and services. By building above the existing library space, the center was able to create a larger, more versatile second-floor conference area that nearly doubles the available meeting space.

Designed with flexibility in mind, the conference area can function as one large gathering space or be divided into smaller rooms using movable partition walls. This allows the center to host multiple activities simultaneously or accommodate larger events when needed.

The rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual technology to support in-person and virtual meetings, physician conferences, educational presentations, support groups, and community programs.

"This project reflects our ongoing commitment to providing exceptional care and support for every patient who walks through our doors," said Deborah Parkinson, Interim Executive Director and Operations Director at the HLRCC. "We are deeply grateful for the Farr family's generosity, which has enabled us to create a welcoming, functional space that will benefit patients, families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals for years to come."

The new space will be used for multi-disciplinary conferences and physician meetings as well as hosting additional educational programs, support groups, and community events related to cancer care. Community organizations

Continued on page 2 ▶



Mary Ann Cordeau cuts the ribbon for the new Farr Patient Navigation Center alongside Waterbury Mayor Paul K. Pernerewski, Jr. (center), surrounded by members of the Farr family, Waterbury Regional Chamber representatives, Leever staff, and community supporters.



Farr family members attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

and groups may also reserve the space for cancer-related meetings and programs.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on July 21 to officially dedicate the new center. Members of the Farr family, local elected officials, healthcare leaders, community partners, and Leever staff and supporters gathered to celebrate the completion of the project and the opportunities it creates for enhanced patient support.

The new Patient Navigation Center represents an investment not only in Leever's facilities, but also in the people it serves, creating a welcoming place where patients, families, healthcare professionals, and community partners can come together to learn, connect, and support one another throughout the cancer journey.



This project reflects our ongoing commitment to providing **exceptional care** and **support for every patient** who walks through our doors.



— Deborah Parkinson
HLRCC Interim Executive Director/Operations Director

Sealing a Moment in Time

Leever places time capsule in new wall to connect past, present, and future.



The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center marked a unique milestone on January 19, 2026, by placing a time capsule within the walls of its new building — a gesture designed to send a message to the future and celebrate the spirit of everyone who has contributed to Leever's mission.

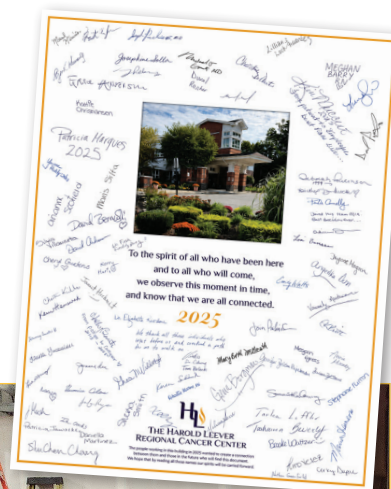
The time capsule, initiated by Deborah Parkinson, HLRCC Interim Executive Director/Operations Director, includes a poster (pictured, right) that reads: "To the spirit of all who have been here and to all who will come, we observe this moment in time, and know that we are all connected."

The poster was signed by staff from all three practices in the building as well as several HLRCC board members. Dr. Victor Chang added: "We thank all those individuals who went before us and created a path for us to walk on."

In addition to the poster, the capsule contains the day's newspaper, a yellow hardhat squeeze ball, and assorted HLRCC giveaways, including lanyards and pens.

The time capsule is intended to remain sealed until found in the future, offering a window into the people, culture, and spirit of HLRCC at this moment in time.

"We wanted to create a way to send a message to the future and honor everyone who is part of the Leever family today," said Deborah Parkinson. "It's a reminder that the work we do is part of something bigger, connecting past, present, and future."



Left to right: Matt Leone, Project Superintendent of A/Z Corp.; Kim Muccino, Radiation Therapy Front Office Supervisor; Deborah Parkinson, Interim Executive Director/Operations Director at HLRCC.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & PROGRAMS

Oral, Head, and Neck Cancer Screening Event

HLRCC hosted a free oral, head, and neck cancer screening event on April 27, providing community members with an opportunity to receive potentially lifesaving screenings and learn more about the importance of early detection.

The event was made possible by the generosity of four physicians: **Maresh Bhaya, MD; Zafar Sayed, MD; Joseph Ravalese, III, MD; and James Clohessy**, Clinical Fellow, Yale School of Medicine, as well as **Amanda Cook, DNP, APRN, FNP (BC)** who volunteered their time and expertise to conduct screenings and answer questions. Their dedication helped raise awareness of head and neck cancers and encouraged participants to take an active role in their health.

We are grateful to all our volunteers for helping to make this valuable community event a success.



Colorectal Cancer Awareness Program

As part of Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the HLRCC hosted a free community education program focused on colorectal cancer prevention, screening, and treatment.

The program, held on March 30, began with a musical performance by **Tiffany Zhang** and featured presentations by **John Zhang, MD, PhD, FACS, FACRS**, program director for Waterbury Hospital's National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer, and **Rebecca Jugo, MD**, Waterbury Hospital. Attendees also had the opportunity to connect with representatives from the Waterbury Area Ostomy Group, including **Bob Reiling**.

Programs like this help raise awareness about the importance of prevention and early detection, which are key to improving outcomes for patients with colorectal cancer.

Relay For Life of Greater Waterbury 2026

HLRCC was proud to once again serve as a sponsor of the Greater Waterbury Relay For Life, held June 20 at Crosby High School in Waterbury. During the event, the Leever Cancer Center was honored with a special award recognizing its outstanding dedication to Relay For Life.

Hosted by the American Cancer Society, Relay For Life brings together cancer survivors, caregivers, volunteers, and community members to celebrate survivorship, remember loved ones lost to cancer, and raise funds to support cancer research, patient services, and advocacy.

Thank you to the ACS, the event organizers, volunteers, participants, fellow sponsors, and our own Team Leever for making this year's event a powerful show of community.

1: Left to right: Silvia Villacorta Rosales and Kim Muccino, HLRCC staff members

2: Team Leever members Sue and Ed DiTota

3: Drs. Elizabeth Riordan, Breast Program Director, and Nicole Sookhan, Trinity Health Of New England

4: Left to right: John Parkinson; Dr. Joseph Ravalese, III of HLRCC; Bill Seres

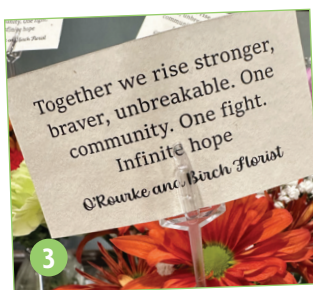


HLRCC Survivors Event Celebrates LIGHT, LIFE and LEGACY

Our special Survivors Celebration event on October 15, 2025, brought patients, families, caregivers, and friends together for an inspiring afternoon centered on this year's theme: Light, Life and Legacy.

Guests enjoyed live music by **Tiffany Zhang** and **Maddy Flagg** (photo 1), a guided painting activity led by **Sarah Aresco** of Eli Lilly (photo 2), poetry readings, and delicious refreshments.

As a special keepsake, each guest received a beautiful vase of flowers generously donated by **O'Rourke & Birch Florist** of Waterbury (photo 3). Participants added the names of loved ones they wished to honor, remember, or celebrate to leaves on the Community Tree (photo 4).



The event was a wonderful reminder of the strength of the cancer community and the importance of celebrating survivors while honoring the lives and legacies of our loved ones.

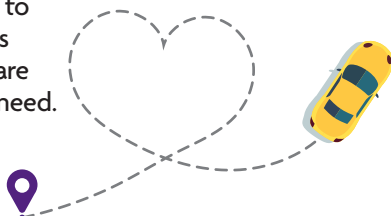


American Cancer Society Grant Helps Patients Access Care

HLRCC is grateful to receive funding from the American Cancer Society to help provide transportation assistance for patients traveling to and from cancer treatment.

The grant is part of the American Cancer Society's nationwide investment to reduce transportation barriers for people undergoing cancer care.

This funding will help ease that burden by providing transportation assistance to eligible patients, making it easier for them to access the care they need.



Quilts That Care Hosts 2025 Fundraiser

Community members gathered on October 16, 2025, for Quilts That Care's Annual Cocktail Fundraiser at The Village at East Farms. The evening celebrated the organization's mission of wrapping cancer patients and their families in comfort and hope through handcrafted quilts. Leever Radiation Oncologist Dr. Douglas Housman was honored at the event.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and supporters, Quilts That Care can continue providing quilts to patients receiving treatment at cancer centers across Connecticut, including the Leever Cancer Center.

*Event attendees (below, left to right):
Christine Damato;
Deborah Parkinson;
Melissa Seres;
Sue Buonomo*



Pounding the Pavement for Seymour Pink

The Leever Cancer Center joined thousands of runners, walkers, survivors, families, and supporters in downtown Seymour for the 14th Annual Pounding the Pavement for Pink 5K on October 4, 2025.

Hosted by Seymour Pink and Seymour Tradition, the event raises funds for breast cancer research and support programs while honoring those who have faced a breast cancer diagnosis. Since the race began in 2012, it has raised more than \$1.2 million for breast cancer research. HLRCC was honored to be part of this inspiring tradition and to stand alongside the many individuals and families affected by breast cancer.

This year's Seymour Pink Pounding the Pavement for Pink 5K is October 3, 2026.



12 Squares: One Powerful Symbol

This beautiful butterfly was created by the Leever Art Therapy Cancer Support Group – 12 individual squares coming together to form one symbol of healing, connection, and transformation.

A Winning Drive for Cancer Care

We are very grateful to the Watertown Police Department for its continued support through the “Teeing Off for The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center” Golf Tournament.

The 10th annual event, held on October 3, 2025, at Crestbrook Golf Course, raised money to help support cancer patients and survivors throughout our community.

The annual tournament brings together local businesses, community members, sponsors, volunteers, and golfers in support of a shared mission: helping patients receive the compassionate, high-quality care they deserve. Over the past 10 years, the event has raised more than \$160,000 for the Leever Cancer Center, helping to fund support programs and services for cancer patients and their families.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Watertown Police Department, tournament organizers, volunteers, sponsors, and participants whose generosity and dedication made this event another tremendous success.

Mark your calendar! This year's golf tournament will be held on October 2, 2026.

Special thanks to Officer Austin Keeney, tournament coordinator (center). Also pictured is volunteer Madi Robertson (left) and Tom Belzek, HLRCC Finance Director (right).



Our Excellence in Breast Care, Recognized Again

The National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, a quality program administered by the American College of Surgeons, represents the gold standard for comprehensive breast care. Administered through the framework of Optimal Resources for Breast Care, these standards structure how a center operates. They ensure patients receive efficient, multidisciplinary, and evidence-based care from screening through survivorship.

As clinical research and operational needs evolve, so do the benchmarks. The 2026 updates streamline administration, eliminate redundant tasks, and advance professional credentialing.



Supporting Are You Dense “For the Girls”

HLRCC was proud to serve as pink sponsor of the Are You Dense “For the Girls” Brunch, held on October 19. The annual event brings together breast cancer survivors, advocates, healthcare professionals, and community members to promote breast health education and raise awareness about the importance of understanding breast density.

We are honored to support organizations like Are You Dense that share our commitment to breast cancer awareness. The 2026 event takes place on October 18.

THE PROTEIN *craze*

FROM PROTEIN-PACKED SODAS TO HIGH-PROTEIN COOKIES AND SHAKES, the nutritional landscape for protein has undergone a huge transformation. What was once a concern for bodybuilders has become an obsession.

**CRAZY
OR
CREDIBLE?**



Claims like “Federal recommendations for protein are a joke” to “Your protein intake in grams should be equal to your body weight” are rampant, often with little data to back them up. Millions of Americans are now eagerly scanning food labels for higher-protein products, even if they are ultra processed. This is fueled by social media, wellness marketing, and the pursuit of longevity. The question remains: Do Americans get enough protein, and are there actually any risks or benefits to consuming two, three, or more times the protein than the standard recommendation?

THE “WHY” BEHIND THE HYPE

The surge in protein consumption is driven by a desire for improved satiety, muscle maintenance, and weight management. Protein is known for its ability to help people feel full, due in part to its fat content. With the rising popularity of various medical weight loss interventions, many individuals are turning to high-protein diets to help preserve lean muscle mass, often lost during periods of rapid weight loss.

Social media platforms have also played a significant role, with various creators popularizing high-protein recipes and meal prep routines. This, combined with a cultural focus on functional wellness and healthy aging, has encouraged many to prioritize this macronutrient as a primary focus of their daily nutrition.

THE CORPORATE CASH-IN

Food companies have responded aggressively to this demand, capitalizing on the consumer belief that “more protein equals better health.” The market has seen a massive influx of protein-enriched products, ranging from pasta and cereals to snacks and beverages, even protein-enhanced water (\$3/bottle). Because consumers are often willing to pay a premium for these items, despite many of them being highly processed with protein added in the form of protein isolates, it has become quite lucrative for food manufacturers.

These factors can make it difficult for consumers to distinguish between truly nutrient-dense foods and processed snacks with added protein.

older adults may benefit from higher intakes, there is a point of diminishing returns.

Consuming excessive protein, especially at the expense of other vital nutrients like fiber and phytonutrients from fruits and vegetables, may not offer additional benefits for the average person. Protein sources are often high in fat, which could be problematic for individuals with a history of heart disease.

THE VERDICT

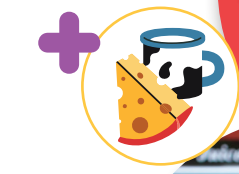
The protein craze is a mix of legitimate nutritional science and savvy marketing. While protein is an essential building block for the body, the “more is always better” mentality can lead to the consumption of overpriced, highly engineered products that may not be necessary for everyone.

For most individuals, focusing on diverse, whole-food sources – such as beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, lean meats, fish, and dairy – is often more beneficial than relying on fortified snacks. Reading full nutrition labels rather than just looking for “high protein” claims can help in making more informed choices. As the trend continues, the challenge remains finding a healthy balance for healthy food choices.

*Article contributed by
Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO.*

DO WE REALLY NEED MORE?

Current guidelines suggest 0.8 grams of protein daily per kilogram of weight for a healthy individual under the age of 40. That translates to about 54 grams of protein for a 150-pound person ($\text{Weight in pounds} \div 2.2 = \text{weight in kilograms/kg}$). After age 40, or when people are sick, very physically active, or recovering from surgery, protein needs can increase to 1-1.2+grams/kg of body weight, or 70-80+ grams for a 150-pound person. Using these guidelines, many people may already be meeting or exceeding their daily protein requirements. While active individuals and



A Community of Caring

SUBARU CONTINUES TO LOVE TO CARE HLRCC was pleased to welcome representatives from **Premier Subaru Middlebury** on June 16 as part of the “Subaru Loves to Care” initiative.

Eighty blankets were delivered along with handwritten messages of hope for patients and families within our community. These thoughtful gifts provide comfort, warmth, and encouragement during times when it is most needed. Staff and visitors in the building were invited to stop by the main lobby to help receive the items and share in this meaningful moment of community support.

We thank Subaru for their generosity and continued commitment to supporting our community!

PINK PATCH PROJECT POWER ▶

We're grateful to the **Wolcott Police Department** for their continued support of our breast cancer community through the Pink Patch Project. The department sold pink patches and coins to honor breast cancer patients, survivors, and families, and to help fund programs that provide education, early detection, and life-saving treatment.

Thank you to everyone who supported this important cause!

Above, right: Wolcott Police Deputy Chief Sara Carrillo



◀ NEIGHBORS FEEDING NEIGHBORS

Local staffing agency Randstad USA partnered with HLRCC for a fall food drive.

Left to right: Katie Juergens, Randstad; Tom Belzek, HLRCC; John Northrop, Randstad



THE SPIRIT OF GIVING GOES ON! A huge thank you to **Beacon Hose and the Prospect Fire Department** for donating funds raised through their No Shave November benefit campaign to support our patients and families.

Above, left to right: Beacon Hose representative Aidan Granoth and Kevin O'Connell; Deborah Parkinson, HLRCC Interim Executive Director/Operations Director; Prospect Fire Department Lieutenant Jay Pugliese and Chief Mike Guastaferrri.



BAGS OF COMPASSION

Many thanks to **Pink Aid** for donating six of their wonderful Pink Posse Bags of Compassion to our patients! These beautifully assembled bags – packed by volunteers from **Riskified**, **Point72**, and **Pink Aid** – provide thoughtful comfort items that truly make a difference for patients going through breast cancer treatment.

POST-ING GENEROSITY

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the **students, faculty, and staff at Post University** for their generous donation. Your contribution helps us continue providing high-quality, compassionate care to everyone who walks through our doors.

aware!

NEWLETTER
IS PUBLISHED BY



THE HAROLD LEEVER
REGIONAL CANCER CENTER

Editor-in-Chief: Deborah Parkinson

Editorial Executive: Tom Belzek

Design: Aro Strategic Marketing

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@leevecancercenter.org

AWARE IS GOING GREEN... AND DIGITAL!

Your same, trusted guide to cancer care, community resources, and what's happening at Leever is now entirely online. To share updates faster and save environmental resources, and ensure our information is always current, our AWARE Newsletter is transitioning from a printed to a digital format.

How to read online: Scan the top QR code (yellow frame) to view or download the full newsletter. To access all archived Aware issues, visit leeverscancercenter.org/news-events/aware-newsletter.

Never miss an issue: Scan the bottom QR code (purple frame) or visit leeverscancercenter.org/email-signup to go to the Email Signup page to sign up for automated email delivery when future editions drop.

Need assistance navigating the website or prefer a physical print-out? We can help! Call us directly at 203-575-5555.



Monthly Support Groups

ART THERAPY CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Second and fourth Tuesday of every month
3:30 - 5PM • Location: HLRCC

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 - 8PM • Location: Jesse Camille's, Naugatuck

For more information, please contact Sue Ascencio: 203-232-3026 or sascencio@yahoo.com.



HOPE MUTUAL AID GROUP FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

First and third Tuesday of every month
4 - 5PM • Location: HLRCC

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



CT MULTIPLE MYELOMA FIGHTERS SUPPORT GROUP

Second Wednesday of every month
6 - 8PM • Location: Prospect Library
For more information, please contact Robin Tuohy: 203-206-3536.



COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Second Thursday of every month
6:30 - 9PM • Location: HLRCC

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

GREATER WATERBURY AREA OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP

First Monday of every month
6:30 - 8:30 PM • Location: HLRCC

For more information, please contact Bob Reiling at the Ostomy Foundation: 475-209-2404.

NEW PODCAST
IS NOW AVAILABLE!

The Critical Role of PET/CT Scans



Nuclear medicine technologists Christina Kadulis (left) and Janet Hubert (right) of HLRCC walk us through how PET/CT imaging combines detailed pictures of the body with information about how cells are working.

Discover what to expect during a typical 90-minute scan, learn how advanced tracers can help detect different types of cancer and dementia, and look at the future of personalized cancer care.

Scan the code to listen now!



LIVESTRONG

AT THE GREATER WATERBURY YMCA

The Greater Waterbury YMCA is offering **LIVESTRONG at the YMCA**, a free 12-week exercise program designed to help cancer survivors regain strength, reduce fatigue, and improve their overall well-being.

Open to cancer survivors age 18 and older, the program includes expert instruction, personalized fitness activities, and a supportive group environment. Participants also receive a free YMCA membership during the program.

To learn more or to enroll, contact the Greater Waterbury YMCA Wellness Coordinator at 203-754-9622, ext. 155. Please visit waterburyymca.org for additional information.