

Camp Bluebird Offers Relaxation and More for Cancer Survivors

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Special to The Times



Camp Bluebird attendees show off their Peanut Butter Energy Protein Bites made while they participated in Forge's program on the importance of nutrition. (Provided Photo).

When you think of cancer, many words may come to mind: chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, sickness, doctors, and others that typically do not invoke a positive response. However, Camp Bluebird has brought a new word for cancer survivors, fun!



Hosted twice a year by St. Vincent's Health System, which is a part of Ascension, Camp Bluebird is open to adults ages 18 or older who have been diagnosed with cancer. Camp Bluebird offers recreation, relaxation, crafts, activities, and opportunities for cancer survivors to openly discuss their experiences and emotions associated with this disease that touches so many lives.

On Oct. 17, over 70 Bluebird campers from central Alabama, with various cancer diagnoses and treated at different healthcare systems, arrived at Camp Sumatanga in Gallant, AL where they found themselves surrounded by woods, mountains, lakes and streams, and away from the problems and interruptions of everyday life.

Forge Breast Cancer Survivor Center's Program and Volunteer Coordinator, Megan Sisk, participated in Camp Bluebird and led an activity focused on the importance of nutrition. The

National Cancer Institute reports, "There is consistent evidence that higher amounts of body fat are associated with increased risks of various types of cancers."



Maintaining a healthy, nutritious diet is important for cancer prevention, as well as preventing a recurrence. Those who participated in the activity were able to create two individual, healthy snacks. The recipes provided by Forge included nutritional tips and information and can be found on Forge's website: www.forgeon.org/resources. Participants were not only educated on the importance of achieving and maintaining proper body fat percentage, but they were also given helpful resources to assist them in reaching this goal.



The mission of Forge is to walk alongside anyone who has been touched by breast cancer by offering support, knowledge, strength, and direction.

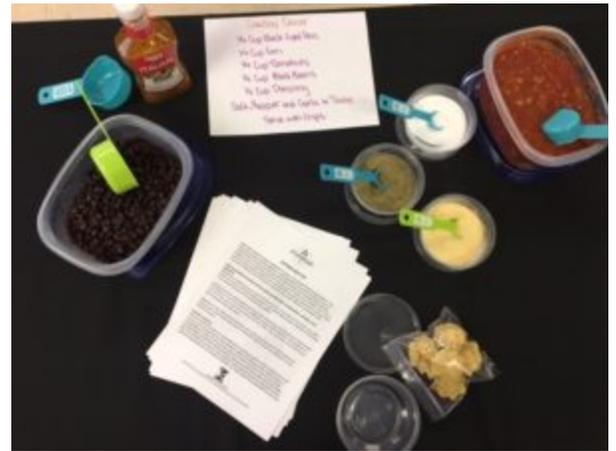
"What makes participating in Camp Bluebird so special is that Forge can offer support and encouragement to all cancer survivors who attend," said Megan Sisk.

Forge is a partnership between Brookwood Baptist Health, the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Grandview Medical Center, St. Vincent's Health System and UAB Medicine. Through Forge, breast cancer survivors receive personalized, non-medical care focused on improving their quality of life from the day of diagnosis, through the balance of life. Survivors can be matched with other survivors to receive mentorship, assist with navigation through the healthcare systems and treatment, and to assist with specific needs like legal, financial, or professional counseling. The family and friends of survivors, also called co-survivors, receive personalized supportive care at Forge too.

In addition, Forge's telephone support line provides a listening ear and a caring heart when a survivor or co-survivor needs it, even after normal business hours. Forge also supports the healthcare professionals that serve survivors by offering resources, extension services, continuing education and Forge's monthly Gardening class at Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Each participant takes home a gardening creation after learning about new and engaging gardening and survivorship topics.

Those who attended Camp Bluebird were able to experience three days of rest while being inspired and empowered with other survivors. Camp Bluebird is generously funded by St. Vincent's Foundation.

Susan Sellers, president of the Foundation said, "We were delighted to have Forge participate in Camp Bluebird. The resources and skills that Forge provided were beneficial to campers who have been touched by all types of cancer, not just breast cancer. Forge is the perfect example of cancer care now and in the future, as we all strive to provide holistic person-centered care that focuses on mind, body, and spirit."



To learn more about Camp Bluebird and the services Forge provides, contact Forge Breast Cancer Survivor Center at 1-800-811-8925 or info@forgeon.org.