

CANCER PATIENTS AT ST. LUKE’S-ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL WIN VACATIONS GIVEAWAY FROM “LAURA’S JOURNEYS”

Program Encourages and Facilitates Therapeutic Recreational Travel for Cancer Patients

New York, NY, July 12, 2010 – Manhattan residents Joanne Gibson and LaVerne M. Jones are the latest winners of vacations awarded by “[Laura’s Journeys](#),” a support program for cancer patients at Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan and other institutions within the Continuum Health Partners network. The program is designed to encourage and facilitate recreational travel for the patient along with their spouse/partner or other family members/friends.

The winners’ names were drawn from among approximately 100 entrants, all currently undergoing treatment for cancer, during a raffle at St. Luke’s-Roosevelt on June 17.

“Laura’s Journeys,” was created by Bill Parness in memory of his wife Laura, who passed away in November 2008 at the age of 54 after a courageous battle with breast cancer. He developed the program based on the therapeutic benefits he and Laura derived from their extensive travels during the six years she was being treated for advanced breast cancer. “Laura and I reaped such rich rewards from traveling during the six years she was being treated for breast cancer,” said Mr. Parness. “She always came home feeling refreshed and ready to tackle her next treatments.”

Ms. Gibson, a Westside resident being treated for breast cancer, won a seven-night cruise for two on the Caribbean Princess. She will be joined on the trip by good friend, Kathie Jordan of California, who will fly to New York for the cruise. They will travel in September to Newport, R.I.; Boston, Mass.; Bar Harbor, Me.; St. John, New Brunswick; and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

“For me, winning this cruise is like seeing the light at the end of the chemo tunnel,” said Ms. Gibson, who will complete her chemotherapy at the end of July. “It will give me a much needed vacation, my first in 12 years.”

Ms. Gibson, who recently celebrated 50 years in the entertainment industry, has worked as an actor on Broadway and Off-Broadway and also appeared on television playing “Gloria” on the NBC series “Dear John” with Judd Hirsch. Before coming back to New York, she was an executive and producer in the mainstream movie business in Los Angeles.

Ms. Jones, a Harlem resident who is also undergoing treatment for breast cancer, will travel later this month with her sister to the Berkshire Mountains for a two-night stay at The Summer White House, a bed & breakfast in Lenox, Mass.

“It was so exciting to win. I couldn’t believe it. I can’t remember the last time I won anything,” said Ms. Jones, a retiree who previously sold and managed real estate and, as an independent contractor, performed pre-school education evaluations for the federal government.

Since its inception in late 2009, “Laura’s Journey’s” has provided vacations and weekend getaways to:

- A 39-year-old breast cancer patient and her fiancé, who enjoyed a one-week Caribbean cruise.
- A 44-year-old colorectal cancer patient, who traveled to Athens, Greece with his wife and child for a six-night stay in the city's historic district.
- A 60-year-old being treated for endometrial sarcoma and a 62-year-old breast cancer patient who enjoyed a one-week vacation in Merritt Island, Fla.
- An 84-year-old cancer patient, who traveled with her daughter and son-in-law to a hotel in Lenox, Mass.

Laura Parness was a patient of Gabriel A. Sara, M.D., Medical Director of the Chemotherapy Infusion Suite and Executive Director of the Patient Services Initiative at Continuum Cancer Centers of New York, located at Roosevelt Hospital. Dr. Sara is a strong advocate for [therapeutic travel](#) for his patients.

“Over my many years of practice, I especially enjoy hearing stories of my patients’ trips, seeing their photos and, more than anything, seeing their smiling faces as they felt revitalized and happy. After their trip they continue to remember the beautiful moments they had and know that they can do it again. Thanks to ‘Laura’s Journeys,’ many patients will have the opportunity to create these memories,” said Dr. Sara.

In addition to trip giveaways, “Laura’s Journeys” offers tips for traveling while undergoing treatment for cancer, money-saving advice, and important guidance such as finding a doctor who is supportive of travel, setting realistic expectations, taking out travel insurance policies that don’t exclude pre-existing conditions, reaching out to airlines and front desks at hotels for special requests, and advising patients to always travel with a doctor’s note.

For more travel tips or to donate, please visit www.laurasjourneys.org.

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