

# side by side

A *Newsletter* by and for patients and families

## In this issue:

iPads for Patients	3
Filling Prescriptions Onsite	4
Thanks from a Former Patient	5
Exercise at Dana-Farber	6
Transitioning off Treatment	7
Patient Resources	8

## Alice in Wonderland

*A Magical Day for Young Patients*



*Organized by generous volunteers, the Alice in Wonderland event gave young patients like those pictured here the opportunity to gather outside of Dana-Farber for a day of fun activities and play time.*

Published quarterly by the Adult Patient and Family Advisory Council (of Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center) and the Pediatric Patient and Family Advisory Council (of Dana-Farber/Children's Hospital Cancer Center).

Eighteen young girls – all of whom are patients at the Jimmy Fund Clinic – stood wide-eyed in a chandeliered room at the Red Lion Inn in Cohasset, Mass., letting out a collective gasp as an elaborately gowned Queen of Hearts warmly welcomed them at the door. The girls were about to enter a sumptuous Alice in Wonderland/Mad Hatter Tea Party hosted by Sharon Chase, the owner of a children's event-planning business. Chase, who dressed as the Queen of Hearts, was

helped by friends and relatives who also dressed as characters from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, including Alice, the Mad Hatter, White Rabbits, and Tweedledee.

As the girls ventured into the fantasy scene, they were given their choice of tutus or fairy dresses, glittery face paint, necklaces, and charms. In addition, a well-known designer spent the afternoon making jewelry with the girls. (Some girls continued to bring their own "magic"

*continued on page 2*

## Yawkey Center Earns Early Raves from Patients



*Elizabeth Adams (right) is one of many patients enjoying the expanded services and benefits of Dana-Farber's Yawkey Center for Cancer Care.*

Elizabeth Adams travels 70 miles each way from Yarmouth Port, Mass., to Dana-Farber twice a week for her multiple myeloma treatment, but the drive has been much easier to take lately. The chemotherapy hasn't changed much, only where she gets it.

Adams is one of the many adult patients at Dana-Farber whose care moved earlier this year from the Dana building to the Yawkey Center for Cancer Care. And while she and others emphasize that they have always felt exceptionally cared for at the Institute, they agree that the comfort, space, and unique features offered by the new facility make for a more enjoyable experience.

"I feel tranquil when I'm there; I feel the beauty all around me," says Adams. "I'm an avid gardener, so I love going in to the [Thea and James Stoneman] Healing Garden where I can smell, look at, and touch the plants. I also frequently go into the chapel because the stained glass windows are so magnificent, and it's

*continued on page 3*



jewelry with them to the Jimmy Fund Clinic when they came for treatment.)

The girls were then seated at ornate tables laden with custom centerpieces and all manner of intricately crafted treats, cleverly bearing Alice-themed tags like “Eat Me” and “Drink Me.” They happily indulged in designer teapot-shaped cookies and ice cream sundaes. The pièce de résistance was a massive cake that took three professionals eight hours to decorate, replicating Wonderland themes and incorporating inspirational words like “hope,” “strength,” “determination,” and “family and friends.”

The girls were particularly taken with Chase, the party’s ingenious impresario who runs her event-planning business through [www.princesssharon.com](http://www.princesssharon.com). Chase, who has a background in music and special education, spent nearly five months soliciting vendors and gathering donations to orchestrate the extravaganza.

“My goal was to give parents the opportunity to see someone they love, who has been through so much, experience real joy,” says Chase, a mother of two who is the child of two cancer survivors and daughter-in-law of longtime Dana-Farber volunteer Mary Ann Chase. “I watched the moms’ eyes fill up that

afternoon as they saw their daughters having so much fun.”

“Princess Sharon doesn’t read books, she *sings* them,” exclaimed one young patient to Dana-Farber’s Martha Young, MS, CCLS, a patient and family relations specialist at the Jimmy Fund Clinic. “We’re so grateful,” Young says. “Events like these give our families opportunities they ordinarily would not have. It always amazes me that people have really good hearts and want to give.”

### A Day for Parents, Too

For the parents of the pediatric patients, the day held special meaning. Young notes that events like these give families a chance to interact outside of the clinic.

“It was a reprieve for moms to not worry for an afternoon,” says Sara Taylor, mother of eight-year old Emily, a leukemia patient who recently completed two years of treatment. “To see smiles on girls of all ages, with all types diagnoses, getting together to celebrate themselves was so special. My daughter was absolutely mesmerized.”

Young says such events are also important because parents of pediatric patients often don’t have the time, energy, or resources to plan such an elaborate day.

“It was so gratifying. I could feel the parents’ appreciation for something special happening for their children,” Chase says. “I wish the girls who were there could just hold the feeling in their hearts forever.”

—Marlene Nusbaum



*Dressed as the queen of hearts, Sharon Chase (left), professional event planner, leads a story-telling session for attendees at the Alice in Wonderland event.*

Photos courtesy of Sarah Phillips Photography; [www.sarahphillipsphoto.com](http://www.sarahphillipsphoto.com)

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