

## Loved Ones Are Also Affected by a Cancer Diagnosis

By Chevas Samuels

Remember growing up, how your parents cared for you during a bout with a cold, flu or a broken bone? Remember their concerned faces while changing work and home routines to care for you, because their goal was to get you healthy?

Cancer is by no means a cold or flu; the effect it can have on a family is immeasurable and care routines must change repeatedly to keep a loved one comfortable and relaxed.

Rita Jackson has been caring for her younger sister, Sandra Towner, since her diagnosis of Stage 4 Pancreatic and Liver Cancer on August 31, 2018.



*“African Americans bear a disproportionate share of the cancer burden in the United States, having the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial or ethnic group for most cancers.”  
(Carol Desantis, MPH, Deepa Naishadham, MA, MS, Ahmedin Jemel, DVM, PhD,) CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians, 05 February 2013.*

*“My sister’s comfort and care has been my first priority,”  
says Rita (left)*

*“I was knocked to my knees when I found out my sister has cancer. There has never been a history of cancer in my family.”*

Rita, a retiree, now spends most of her time caring for Sandra.

*“The very least I can do is make her comfortable, make sure she gets her meds and help her get to her medical appointments.”*

*“Some days I could be with her all day. My daily life has definitely changed. I go to her doctor’s appointments with her, to chemo, and sit with her several times a week, since she went to a hospice.”*

What is your support system? Who keeps you going?

*My support comes from my faith in God He keeps me in a state of grace. My husband, brother, daughter and members of my church family are also part of my support system*

Rita and Sandra's story is one of the many reasons, why the **ACE Program at Arizona State University** sponsors a Memorial Tree located in its Cactus Cancer Garden, to commemorate not only cancer victims, cancer survivors, those currently undergoing treatment, but their support system; family and friends.

Each name tag in the Memorial Garden represents one of them. Rita, Sandra, and the list goes on.

*Sunday February 23, 2019 at 4am, Sandra Towner, succumbed to Stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer.*

- ◆ The American Cancer Society estimates that pancreatic cancer accounts for about 3% of all cancers in the US and about 7% of all cancer deaths. It is slightly more common in men than in women. Unfortunately, there is no routine screening tests available that could spot the cancer early and allow treatment before it has spread. Fortunately, other cancers are easier to find by screening.

Where to find a Mammogram Screening Center:

<https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/testing/types/mammograms/where>

CDC - Find a Screening Provider Near You

Clinical breast examinations. Mammograms. Pap tests. Pelvic examinations. Human papillomavirus (HPV) tests.

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/screenings.htm>