

AZ Giving Spotlight: Jim Brewer of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Written by Samantha Giunta

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The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) first came together in Arizona in 1963. The society joins together to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, and myeloma while giving support to those suffering the illnesses. Meet Jim Brewer, the executive director, and learn ways to get involved and give back.

Please tell us about yourself, the history of the society, and how you became a part of it.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) has existed in Arizona since 1963; however, we have only recently become the stand alone Arizona Chapter (July 2012). Previously, Arizona was included with other states/markets into regional chapters. I joined LLS in June 2011 after having spent most of my career in sports and entertainment with the Phoenix Suns (15 years) and Phoenix Zoo (four years), as well as one season with the Phoenix Coyotes immediately prior to my joining LLS. As an Arizona native, the opportunity to contribute the experiences and skills honed over my more than 20 years working in the Valley to an organization like LLS was very attractive... it's gratifying coming to work every day knowing that you truly are working to find cures for cancer.

How many years has the Arizona chapter been together and how many members are there currently in the society?

We are celebrating our 50th Anniversary of LLS in Arizona, but only our first anniversary as the Arizona Chapter. We don't necessarily have 'members' in the society...we are a national organization with 61 chapters in the US and Canada. We all work to raise money to invest in life-saving research and to provide services and support to the more than 1 million North Americans battling blood cancers, including approximately 21,000 in Arizona.

What is the mission and goals of the society?

The mission of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancers, funding life-saving blood cancer research around the world and providing free information and support services to patients and their families. Our vision is a world without blood cancers.

What kind of support programs do you offer the leukemia and lymphoma diagnosed and survivors?

We offer a variety of educations, emotional and financial support to patients and their families. We have a comprehensive Web site as well as a toll-free Information Resource Center that has masters-level nurses and social workers available to answer detailed questions and connect patients with support. We facilitate family support groups with trained volunteer leaders, as well as our First Connections program – which matches newly diagnosed patients with a patient who has already undergone treatment for that specific disease. Each chapter has a manager of Patient Access & Education, who works directly with patients in the community to connect them with needed resources. So we are able to create a support system in many different ways. We also offer financial aid and copayment assistance, which has provided more than \$1.5 million in direct support to Arizona blood cancer patients just in the past year.

What are some ways community members can help the society?

Our focus remains on raising money to invest in life-saving research. We do this through a number of different fund-raising campaigns and events, as well as through direct donations from the community. We also offer volunteer opportunities to support our events and are very grateful for the helping hands.

What events are coming up that community members can get involved in?

There are many ways for the community to become involved right now... join our Team In Training program to train for the PF Chang's Arizona Rock & Roll Marathon or ½ Marathon. We've helped literally thousands of people of all ages and abilities reach the finish line while raising money for life-saving research. In its 25th year, Team In Training is a truly incredible, life-changing experience. We also have our Light The Night Walk on Nov. 9 at Tempe Arts Park, which is not a fitness challenge in any way, just a magical celebration of the progress made in the fight

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against cancer. Held in the evening, we feature all sorts of family-oriented fun (including fireworks), but also show all of our patients and the families who have lost a loved one to cancer that they are not alone and are part of an amazing community of support. Also, make sure your school is a part of our Pennies for Patients or Pasta for Pennies programs, which provide an opportunity for students to work together to raise money while learning more about math, science and public service.

Team In Training: www.teamintraining.org/az

Light The Night: www.lighthenight.org/az

School & Youth Programs: www.schoolandyouth.org/az

To learn more about The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, click [here](#).