Annie Johnson is living proof there is hope for cancer survivors. She was 23 when a persistent cough led to a devastating diagnosis: Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. A large tumor was found in her chest cavity and then more tumors appeared.

“From that point on it was a whirlwind. I went through countless surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation, two stem cell transplants and still the cancer was not under control,” Annie says. The horrifying new word “terminal” was added to her diagnosis in July 2007, she recalls. She was told she’d have two, perhaps three, months to live.

“At that point, I said, ‘All right, I’m going to survive.’” Having undergone treatments at the Avera Cancer Institute, Annie found solace in living a healthy lifestyle and utilizing therapeutic treatments. “I really, really wanted to hold on and have hope that this terminal diagnosis wasn’t something I was going to have to accept.”

And she didn’t. Annie was declared officially in remission in March 2008. Today, Annie lives life to the fullest and offers other cancer survivors advice and hope. “You do not have to go through cancer alone. There are so many resources, so many groups, so many people who are out there who want to help you through the process.”

She credits great care and support with a focus on the spiritual side through her faith in God as the extra things that helped her while going through treatment. Annie will continue receiving treatments and check-ups at Avera Cancer Institute and has confidence in the quality of services and level of expertise the new institute will offer. “I’m so excited about it because it’s so beyond anything I’ve ever imagined,” she says.

“Simply put, the added features of the new Avera Cancer Institute will help save lives. This is my story of hope.”

– ANNIE JOHNSON, CANCER SURVIVOR
Your support of our mission continues to make a difference in our community. Whether you attended an event, made a gift in honor of a loved one or supported one of our capital campaigns—we simply thank you for furthering our mission.

The last few months have been filled with events and activities. The Avera Race Against Breast Cancer celebrated its 21st year of supporting local cancer survivors and their families. The Big Grape continues to raise funds for pediatric patients. We are happy to report outstanding support from the community to help further our mission.

The Avera Family Wellness program concluded its successful first year at Garfield Elementary School. The children had an opportunity to participate in violin training, drama and other developmental activities. Without community support, this program could not have been offered. We are excited about the opportunity to expand the program next year.

Cancer touches so many lives. One in three women will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime while one in two men face the same devastating illness. It has been projected that cancer will become the leading cause of death in 2010. To combat this disease, Avera McKennan is expanding the Avera Cancer Institute to nearly four times the size of the current building. In the coming months you will be seeing more information about this project and how you can support our efforts. We invite you to share your personal stories by visiting our website at www.AveraMcKennanFoundation.org.

Despite recent changes in the economy, the mission of Avera McKennan remains: to make a positive impact in the lives and health of persons and communities by providing quality services guided by Christian values. The many programs that make an everlasting impact on our patients and families could not be delivered without your continued support.

Thank you,

W. Tim Kromminga, Foundation President
With violins tuned and an eagerness to showcase talents, children, family and friends gathered for a year-end recital featuring students who participated in the Avera Family Wellness pilot program at Sioux Falls Garfield Elementary School. The students demonstrated a variety of movement, violin and theater while parents and program supporters cheered them on. Violin instructor Jay Reeve says that this recital is a vital part of the program and plays several significant roles. “With instrumental study, performance is normally the goal and the excitement surrounding it motivates students to reach for their best,” he says. He adds that it often puts the seal on that feeling of accomplishment they earned through the year.

Thanks to generous support from community members, businesses and the Sioux Falls School District, the Avera Family Wellness Program has provided children enrolled in early childhood Head Start and Title I programs at Garfield Elementary School with developmental activities aimed to better prepare them for school. Program supporter Tom Walsh attended the recital and saw first-hand how the successes of the program have benefited the students. “I believe in the Avera Family Wellness program and its ability to make a positive impact on these children,” says Walsh. “We support this program because of our dedication to improve the lives and health of children in our community and to enable them to live more successful lives.”

Young Violinists Join South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra

A large portion of the Avera Family Wellness program is Suzuki violin training. Throughout the school year, students went from using box violins and wooden dowel bows and standing on foot charts to playing songs like “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” on real violins. Such an accomplishment requires learning more than 50 skills in addition to discipline, concentration, self-control and coordination.

In March, the group of budding musicians was invited to perform alongside the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra on the main stage of the Great Hall at the Washington Pavilion. More than 20 children from the Avera Family Wellness program took to the stage to join other young violinists in one of the world’s finest concert halls.

Thanks to generous support, the Avera Family Wellness program plans to expand violin training next year to give many more children the opportunity to benefit from this program.

Help for the Whole Family

“Soon after my son began the program and started making progress, the family coach thought my other children could benefit as well. We soon had the entire family undergoing treatment and realized what an amazing effect it had on our household dynamic and their futures. Thank you so much for helping our family become whole.”

- SINGLE PARENT AND MOTHER OF AVERA FAMILY WELLNESS STUDENTS

Avera Family Wellness Program 2009–2010 Plans

Going into its second year, the Avera Reaching Kids initiative is proud to announce new plans to strengthen family wellness by providing child-appropriate resources to better serve families.

- All children three to five years of age currently enrolled at Hayward Elementary School will have access to the Avera Family Wellness program’s activities and services.
- Violin training will be integrated into the classroom setting during the day, giving 160 children enrolled in Head Start and Title I the opportunity to benefit from the program.
- A family health coach will be assigned to each family to provide skilled professional guidance to improve health and wellness in addition to assisting parents to better achieve goals.

For more information, please contact Robin Prunty, planned giving officer, at (605) 322-8833.
GROWTH
With a framework to support community growth and transformation, the new Avera Cancer Institute is designed to meet the needs of today’s cancer patients by providing all-encompassing care with special consideration for using local resources and amenities to benefit the local economy. As the largest single building project in Sioux Falls history, we look at this growing need for cancer care as an opportunity to live out the mission of Avera McKennan while offering key economic benefits.

HOPE
Our hope is to change the face of cancer in the region by offering the latest technology in a fully integrated cancer treatment facility to help patients overcome the nation’s second-leading killer. It’s the best care in the best environment for the best possible outcome for our patients.

GIVING
Avera Cancer Institute seeks to become a healing ministry unlike any other—a reflection of the exemplary care and dedication of Avera McKennan’s top-ranked cancer programs. An empowering celebration of life through inspiring spaces and a commitment to caring, the journey of living with cancer begins at diagnosis. The journey of Avera Cancer Institute begins here...with you.

“I truly have a deep respect for my patients. I don’t know where cancer survivors get the courage to go through what they go through. Our patients are our ultimate boss, and as physicians, we need to treat them with dignity.”

– SAMIR ABU-GHAZALEH, MD

“As an expectant mother dealing with the devastating diagnosis of cancer, we relied on our spirituality to get us through. I gave birth to a healthy little girl and named her after what I needed most during that time... Faith.”

– STACEY PETERSON

faith, hope and love
by Stacey Peterson, cancer survivor

It was supposed to be one of the most exciting times of my life. I was in my 26th week of pregnancy and feeling pretty good when a maternal voice inside me said to visit the doctor. I had an ultrasound and was told I had Stage I ovarian cancer and underwent immediate emergency surgery.

I went on to deliver a healthy little girl but began chemotherapy a mere 12 days later. I just remember thinking how lucky I was to be at the Avera Cancer Institute and really credited Dr. Samir Abu-Ghazaleh and his team for keeping me and my family educated and informed.

Two years later, I look back and recall times the road got a little bumpy but am so appreciative of all the great care I received throughout my journey. I always found that having my spirituality supported by my hospital helped me recover.

Today, I am in remission and am forever thankful for the support the staff at Avera McKennan has shown me. When I think about the new Avera Cancer Institute, I know it can only get better from here.

Pictured: Stacey Peterson and her daughter, Faith
**Never Destroy Hope**

“I’ve seen the ‘one in a million’ and have learned to offer my patients encouragement through confidence and respect.”

— Samir Abu-Ghazaleh, MD

No one wants to think about it, but if you’ve been diagnosed with cancer, you have no choice. It’s in your body, you have to deal with it and it’s good to have options because once diagnosed, life revolves around battling it—and beating it. Since 1983, Avera has been the regional leader in cancer care. Today, we’re expanding and transforming our care to bring cancer services to a new level yet to be offered in our region. In addition to state-of-the-art facilities, technology and equipment, programs and services provided by caring and experienced professionals prove the new Avera Cancer Institute is more than just a building.

“It’s all about the patient,” says Dr. Samir Abu-Ghazaleh, MD, FACOG, FACS. “Treat them like you would your family and do the right thing because as a physician, you should always give them the best you can give.” The new Avera Cancer Institute will offer a continuum of cancer services under one roof, from prevention and screening, to diagnosis and treatment, to support and survivorship care. Patient and family focus groups helped tailor building features and programs to provide for all needs in one healing environment.

All aspects of our comprehensive cancer care are an extension of Avera’s ministry of healing, and our commitment to caring for the whole person—body, mind and spirit. “We are so blessed to have such a large group of caring physicians,” says Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh. “A lot can be said about what can be done physically, but it’s the emotional and spiritual strength that we provide that can truly foster hope.” This strong commitment by physicians ensures that the most progressive, comprehensive care is available right here in Sioux Falls and throughout the region.

**Building Buzz:**

Avera Cancer Institute offers hope to patients through integrative medicine and survivorship programs.

**Did You Know...**

- Of all cancer patients, 70 percent use some form of integrative medicine. The integrative medicine component of Avera Cancer Institute includes such services as dietitian consultations, a healing touch program and plans to incorporate a physician to assist in herbal and vitamin counseling.

- There are more than 10 million cancer survivors nationally with increasing demands for services. Physicians at Avera Cancer Institute of care, a breast cancer support group with emphasis on rehabilitation and have implemented the region’s only cancer fitness/rehabilitation program.

**Share Your Story...**

Nothing is more inspiring than hearing personal epiphanies of cancer survivors, their families and friends who have been empowered by a greater understanding of how cancer resources deeply affect health and quality of life. We’d like to hear your story, and share it with the community.

Tell us your survival story, your experience with the Avera Cancer Institute or your hopes with the new facility. Visit www.AveraMcKennanFoundation.org and click on the CARING FOR CANCER: GROWTH, HOPE, GIVING link.
With every birth of a child comes a celebration of life. Nearly one year ago, the new Women’s Center at Avera McKennan opened its doors, offering much more than just a place—but an attitude, a way of looking at birth as a spiritual and uniquely personal event in the life of a family. The Avera McKennan Foundation helps provide life-saving technology and support programs to help make every birth a positive experience.

**Gratitude UNLOCKS THE FULLNESS OF LIFE**

**Little Miracle**
“For many years, my husband and I struggled to get pregnant. We were so shocked to learn we had finally conceived and were delighted to learn everything was progressing normally. Months went by and past memories of disappointment melted away. When the time finally arrived for us to welcome our newest member of the family, we knew there was no better place to be than the new Women’s Center at Avera McKennan. From housekeeping to nurses, food services to the physicians, our entire experience was wonderful. We were even surprised when a few of the nurses wrote on a little hat the words ‘Little Miracle’ and presented it to us in recognition of our past struggles. We still have that little hat and remember how touched we were by the caregivers for making our special event even more special.”

**Gentle Words and Manners**
“Last year marked my second experience with the Women’s Center at Avera McKennan. And just like with my three-year-old daughter, my experience with giving birth to my son was top notch. The nurses were so caring and concerned about my comfort level and asked me often about my needs. But more important, the caregivers at Avera Women’s Center gave me confidence with gentle words and manners. They made me feel special and unique—like I was only mother on the unit. I couldn’t have asked for a better experience.”

**Big Rewards Come in Little Packages**
“I was 31 weeks pregnant with my second child when I was admitted into the Avera Women’s Center after experiencing contractions. After being told there was a good chance I would be delivering that day, I immediately called my husband and the nurses paged Dr. Sam Rogers. He came into the room with a calm manner yet explained his concerns to us. I felt nothing was more important to him at that time than me and my unborn child. Feeling his wisdom with every word he spoke, I found comfort. I remained on bed rest and delivered our beautiful baby boy, Rylon Shawn, a few days later. Since that time, Dr. Rogers has continued to discuss Rylon’s progress and explained issues we should be aware of. I just want to thank him so much for his knowledge, love, compassion and caring. He made this rough road a little smoother!”

– DAWN ANDERSON

When you contribute financially to the Avera McKennan Foundation, you show your appreciation in a way that will help others receive outstanding care. For more information on the Guardian Angel program or to make a gift, please contact Angie Baszler, director of annual giving, at (605) 322-8831 or visit www.AveraMcKennanFoundation.org.
For the second year, Avera Children’s Hospital & Clinics hosted a remembrance ceremony to bring grieving families together to honor and remember their loved ones. With the help of the Avera McKennan Foundation, this private, non-denominational Christian ceremony was free and available to all families and friends of former patients from Avera Children’s.

The afternoon began with a welcome ceremony that included a scripture and family reflection. Afterwards a reception and sibling art activity led into a butterfly release. “This event allows each family an opportunity to honor the child’s memory and brings them together with other families experiencing the same feelings,” says Jenni Struck, who co-hosted the event with Michele Kuhmert. “They were also able to reconnect with some of the staff members who spent so much time with them during their difficult experiences.”

Parents were encouraged to bring five mementos of their child to be displayed during the reception to help initiate conversation amongst the group. “You want to be able to talk about your child and share memories of that child regardless of how long they were with you,” she adds. “Many people don’t understand that a child will always be a part of your family and that you need to recognize and honor them just as you do your living children.” Letting go of someone we love is hard. Ceremonies and grief programs can not only help us understand the loss but can teach us to celebrate life in the midst of the grief.

The care from Avera Children’s does not end with the loved one’s passing. There are programs and support groups to help each member of the family, from the oldest to the youngest, cope with the loss. One of the ways we survive our losses is through our memories.

Catching a glimpse of a butterfly can give an unexpected lift. They seem to appear at just the right time, telling us that better things—and warmer days—are within our reach. For such a delicate creature to survive gives hope that we can cope with whatever trials life has in store for us. One of those trials is saying goodbye to someone we love.

About Charitable Remainder Trusts

A popular and flexible type of life income plan is a charitable remainder unitrust. Cash, securities, real property or other assets are transferred into the trust. The trustee manages the assets and pays you or others you choose a variable income for life or for a term of years. When the trust terminates, the remaining assets in the trust are transferred to the Avera McKennan Foundation.

Features and benefits:
- Income for life
- Assets transferred to the trust can be reinvested
- Ability to choose the trustee (may be the donor)

Get Started Today

For more information, or to establish your charitable remainder trust, please contact Robin Prunty, planned giving officer, at (605) 322-8833.
The Avera Race Against Breast Cancer

Thank you to all of the participants, volunteers and supporters who attended the 21st Annual Avera Race Against Breast Cancer on Saturday, May 9, at the Avera McKennan Fitness Center!

With your support, the race was host to a record-setting \textbf{4,850 participants} and raised more than \textbf{$254,000$} to benefit cancer patients in our community!

\textbf{Thank you!}