



Joan Bisesi

ACCORDING TO VERSE, WE BRING NOTHING INTO THIS
WORLD AND IT IS CERTAIN WE CAN CARRY NOTHING
OUT. BUT WE CAN LEAVE SOMETHING OF ENDURING
VALUE BEHIND AND JOAN BISESI HAS DONE JUST THAT.

Joan Bisesi Family and Friends Create Fund for Head and Neck Cancer Research

First diagnosed with cancer in 1996, Joan Bisesi shortly thereafter had cancerous tumors removed from her mouth. A recurrence in 2000 led to the removal of part of her jaw. By April 2001, approaching the end of her radiation therapy, Joan learned she was pregnant. By late August, the cancer had returned and physicians, hoping to save both mother and child, performed a Caesarian section birth. Soon after, Joan's cancer had become inoperable, and 10 weeks following the birth of her daughter, Mira Sophia, Joan Bisesi succumbed to cancer.

"Joan was always positive and courageous, even in her fight against cancer," says Phil Bisesi, her husband. In an e-mail sent to friends and family months before her death, Joan stated that she and Phil had "decided not to be bashful" in asking for their support to help find a cure for cancer.

Working with the development department staff at The James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute, the couple established The Joan Bisesi Fund to support head and neck cancer research. According to David Schuller, MD, director of The James and Joan Bisesi's physician, the fund will support initial research into the causes of squamous cell carcinoma as well as attract grants needed for

further research. The fund has already exceeded its goal of raising \$25,000 over a five-year period. More than \$33,000 had been raised by the end of June 2002.

In March, during a fundraiser held in honor of Joan's 35th birthday, friends and family raised \$18,000, with plans to make the event annual. In addition, the Head & Neck Cancer Support Group at The James has embraced the fund by setting up its own fund raising committee. A group of Columbus Marathon runners also plans to sponsor a "Joan's Mile" to raise additional funds.

While head and neck cancer encompasses only 6-7 percent of all cancers diagnosed, statistics show an increasing incidence of this aggressive form of cancer among young adults.

"Part of what we hope to achieve, in addition to finding a cure, is to develop an awareness among people so they seek medical advice early on," says Phil Bisesi. "There's not a great awareness of this type of cancer and the impact it has on people's lives. It impacts their ability to speak and eat, as well as their physical appearance," says Bisesi.

"With the creation of this fund, we hope to prevent others from having to go through what Joan did." 