



spotlight on health

Peer-To-Peer Program Connects Patients, Family Members

(NAPSA)—Anita Johnson knows what lung cancer patients feel upon hearing the words of the initial diagnosis of the disease. For more than 11 years, she has survived lung cancer, a disease that inflicts nearly 170,000 Americans every year. According to the American Cancer Society, the numbers are growing among certain populations, such as women.

When patients are diagnosed with lung cancer, they may experience emotions they have never felt before. Johnson says that having someone to share thoughts and experiences with is extremely important to help survivors cope with the disease. She is involved in the Phone Buddy program, a support network through the Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy, Support, and Education (ALCASE). As part of the program, Johnson offers support to patients and/or family members touched by lung cancer.

“I am a lung cancer survivor, but also a Phone Buddy volunteer for patients, like myself, who need someone to talk to,” says Johnson, who has been a Phone Buddy to more than 100 people in the last three years. “The program has really taught me a lot about how people cope with this disease and made me realize how important it is for people to know that there is support out there for them—they’re not alone.”

With less than 50 support groups in the U.S., people afflicted with lung cancer, family members and caregivers often feel isolated. The Phone Buddy program is a peer-to-peer support network and



A phone/e-mail network offers support for lung cancer patients and family members.

connects people to volunteers who have gone through similar experiences. Volunteers provide support that written information and/or professional advice alone may not provide. The program is unique in that it connects people from all over the country.

“The Phone Buddy program is exactly what newly diagnosed patients and their families need to help them cope with the disease and find support from others who have had similar experiences,” said ALCASE Executive Director, Deanna L. Menesses.

Through the support of a medical education grant from Astra-Zeneca, the program provides the Buddy volunteers with a phone card to help pay for some of the costs of long-distance phone calls and allows Buddies to connect more freely. Buddies can also e-mail. A training manual is provided to help guide volunteers, and all Buddies receive ongoing training and up-to-date information.

Individuals who would like to participate in the program can contact ALCASE directly at (800)-298-2436.