

## **How can we enjoy the beautiful sunshine safely?**

When I was young, I belonged to the group of girls who put iodine in our baby oil to make sure we got "a good tan". Luckily, I only did that one summer. Now, I don't leave the house without at least 30 SPF sunscreen on my face! There is so much more we are learning about sunshine and it's important to take time to understand the dangers of over exposure to the sun.

My husband, David McCourt, was first diagnosed with melanoma 17 years ago. He had the tumor cut out, and the area treated. Two years later, it returned. Rather than extensive chemotherapy, David turned to more natural methods of treatment; that were still in trials, back at John Wayne Institute in California. Unbelievably, David beat the recurrence of the melanoma and continued to live an abundant life here in Palm Beach. Always wearing a hat, long pants, and sometimes even jackets was his sun safe protocol against the sun's harmful rays. We were sure to eat well, healthy organic foods, and lots of fresh juices that provided antioxidants. That worked fine, before he noticed something growing again in that original location inside his abdomen, twelve years later!

Knowing at that point that the melanoma had spread to his brain, lungs, liver, and spine, our doctor told us that most people "would go to Hawaii or something", and enjoy their remaining days. We were given three months to live. Devastated, David and I looked at each other and agreed we wanted to fight. Immediately we started to plan multiple strategies, that might or might not work, yet we were willing to try. Bio-therapies had come a long way and that was David's preference. We tried interleukin and forms of an anti-pd1. We went to Israel for three months to have a procedure done which grows the cancer-fighting cells by the billions and is put back into the body. For us, interleukin offered the best results for David, until it didn't work anymore.

There is no one miracle cure for melanoma. We believe that there are more and more effective ways to control and manage the disease, depending upon how each person reacts to different types of treatment. What we did learn, is that miracles CAN happen because David lived another three years, rather than three months. We had time to spend with his family, his sons and their children his passing. Our hope is that we continue to improve all methods that are being used to manage metastatic melanoma, and that more people can have access to that gift of time in their lives, until we find a cure.

Until then, be sun safe in the Florida sunshine and don't forget your sunscreen and your hat!

*Mrs. Mary Bryant McCourt*