



## The Hope Light Story

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On the morning of July 4, 2005, Rudy and Beverly Bess awoke to learn that both a family member and a good friend died from cancer within 15 minutes of each other at/about 3:00 am. This was devastating news which drove the couple to establish a foundation to help others become knowledgeable of how to detect, fight and survive cancer. At the time, Rudy was employed by The Boeing Company and Beverly was employed by Bank of America and this is their story.



Rudy and Beverly Bess

The couple established The Hope Light Foundation in 2005 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity dedicated to the fight against cancer to increase cancer awareness and enable people to recognize cancer signs and symptoms, detect cancer early, take immediate action to get help and save lives. Beverly is a four-time cancer survivor and has been active in several cancer organizations that used her experiences to help people fight cancer and become cancer survivors. The Foundation has no paid employees with all donations being tax deductible and goes directly to supporting the Foundation's mission, i.e.:

*The Hope Light Foundation is dedicated to 1) communicating cancer awareness information to impact cancer prevention, early cancer detection and survivorship and 2) to promote cancer education and research.*

In October 2005, the Foundation received a letter of endorsement from Dr. Timothy Eberlein, Director of the Siteman Cancer Center, naming Dr. John Dipersio, Siteman Deputy Director, as a primary contact for technical and professional support.

In November 2006, the Foundation received the first of many annual donations from The George A. Bates Memorial Foundation that significantly increased the foundations ability to become more involved in cancer awareness outreach activities both locally and state wide to include Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky. The Bates Memorial Foundation is the primary donor for Hope Light.



First George A. Bates Memorial Foundation Check Presentation to Hope Light in January 2007. Above Photo L-R: Mike Murray-George A. Bates Memorial Foundation, Rudy Bess-Hope Light, Beverly Bess-Hope Light, John Davis-Hope Light.



This new funding source allowed the Foundation to increase outreach activities to Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri that included helping people learn about cancer prevention and promote cancer screening and early detection to decrease new cancer cases and increase survivability of this deadly disease. The Foundation researched cancer death and new case rates, demographics, socioeconomic status, and health and lifestyle factors that help determine target communities with the greatest need for help to fight cancer and focus Foundation activities.

Shortly after becoming a nonprofit organization in 2006, the Foundation's first project was to build a website for use as a clearing house for all-cancers information and as a means of communicating the importance of cancer prevention and early detection. The website at [www.hopelightproject.com](http://www.hopelightproject.com) contained instant links to major cancer organization websites, telephone numbers and chat lines to obtain cancer information and financial help 24/7/365.

In 2009, the Foundation began establishing Hope Light Cancer Corners in publically accessible facilities in underserved and high poverty rural communities with a high risk for cancer. These hosting facilities included libraries, hospitals, local health departments, universities and businesses in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri. The Cancer Corners consisted of a display rack with Hope Light provided cancer materials including booklets, pamphlets, CD's, magazines and other materials from well-respected nationwide cancer organizations such as the National Cancer Institute and Susan G. Komen. These materials were provided for individuals to take with them to gain knowledge about cancer prevention, cancer signs and symptoms and if detected and/or diagnosed to provide information on cancer treatment options and clinical trials. The first Cancer Corner was established in the Metropolis

Public Library with 13 more to follow in Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri.



Cancer Corner in McCreary County Public Library in Whitley City, Kentucky

In 2008, Rudy organized and chaired the Southern Illinois Cancer Partnership (SICP) for the purpose of bringing the fight against cancer to rural southern Illinois. The SICP membership included Southern Illinois University, Illinois Department of Public Health and National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Services. In 2010, the SICP

The SICP membership included Shawnee Community College, Southern Illinois University, University of Illinois Extension, National Cancer Institute Cancer

transitioned into the reinstated state-level Illinois Partnership for Cancer Prevention and Control that later became known as the Illinois Cancer Partnership (ICP).





Information Service, Southern Seven Health Department and Susan G. Komen for the Cure-Evansville.

The Metropolis Hope Light Project was established in 2008 as a 501(c)(3) d.b.a. entity of The Hope Light Foundation. The Project's purpose was to oversee fundraising and design and construction of the Metropolis Lighthouse "Hope Light". The lighthouse would serve as a national beacon of hope for cancer patients and as a means to help bring attention to the Hope Light website with life-saving cancer information. The Project was chaired by Metropolis Alderman Bill Carrell who later became the official Metropolis Lighthouse Keeper.

Rudy and Beverly's original plan in 2005 called for building a lighthouse on the Ohio River as a beacon of hope for cancer patients and their family and friends. The couple photographed over 450 lighthouses in the US and Canada and knew how much people loved them and regarded them as symbols of hope for survival by providing guidance to safe harbors such as cancer victims look for when they are first diagnosed. Being natives of Metropolis, Illinois, Rudy and Beverly selected their hometown as the site of the "Hope Light" and presented

their plans to the city which were subsequently approved.



In 2006, Rudy contacted Andy Eggemeyer, President of Eggemeyer Associates Architects of Carbondale, Illinois, and asked him if he would be interested in designing the Metropolis Lighthouse as a pro bono project. Andy agreed and committed his firm to design the lighthouse at no cost. Andy passed away due to cancer in 2009, however, his design firm continued to be an invaluable asset to the Metropolis Hope Light Project Team from 2006 until the lighthouse design and construction was completed in 2014.



Team Hope L-R: Andy Eggemeyer, Bill Carrell-City of Metropolis, Beverly Bess and Rudy Bess

The City of Metropolis, Illinois provided land for the lighthouse overlooking the Ohio River at the entrance to the beautiful and peaceful Dorothy Miller Park. In 2005, the Metropolis Hope Light Project team established a goal to raise \$50,000 for Hope Light construction. Nine years later, in July of 2013, the goal was achieved when the Project received a donation of \$25,000 from the Metropolis Area Tourism Commission.



Final lighthouse design began in mid 2013 with construction of the lighthouse completed in June 2014 thanks to many monetary and in-kind donations and many hours of volunteer labor with a special acknowledgement to Eggemeyer Associates Architects for their invaluable design services. Sales of personalized bricks in the walkway surrounding the lighthouse will be used to sustain lighthouse maintenance.

In September 2014, the lighthouse was approved by the Illinois Office of Tourism as an official state attraction and it was subsequently dedicated to the fight against cancer in November 2014 at a ceremony on the lighthouse site. The state added the Metropolis Lighthouse to the I-24 attraction signs approaching Exit 37 and the city installed waymark signs from the interstate to the lighthouse. The Metropolis Lighthouse “Hope Light” is the worlds only lighthouse designed,

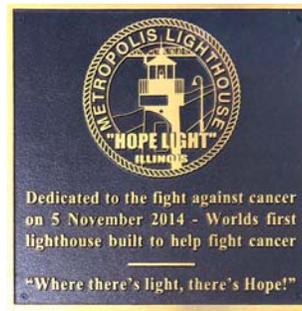
The Hope Light’s white conical-shaped tower represents the fight against lung cancer; the teal daymark band represents the fight against ovarian cancer although the lighthouse is dedicated to the fight against all cancers; the black lantern room represents the dark and rough journey into the unknown such as experienced by cancer patients; and the white-light lantern represents Hope; Hope for survival – Hope for a cure.

Rudy lost his mom and several aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins to cancer. It became obvious from his personal experiences in helping his family members fight cancer and discussions with other cancer victims that not enough attention was afforded to communicating awareness of cancer signs and symptoms to enable early detection. With knowledge of cancer signs and symptoms, self-exams and screening tests, cancer could be detected early while it remains in the organ of origin. If



Metropolis Lighthouse “Hope Light” looking East toward the I-24 bridge

built and dedicated to the fight against cancer.



Metropolis Lighthouse Plaque



The Metropolis Lighthouse “Hope Light”



immediate action is taken to seek medical help at the first sign of cancer, it can be treated before it spreads to adjacent tissues, lymph nodes and to other organs. Early cancer detection, diagnosis and treatment could lead to survivorship and a full and active life.

Rudy is an active member of cancer consortiums in Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky. In 2015, he was elected to the position of Co-Chair of the Illinois Cancer Partnership and served in this position until 2018. Rudy also serves on the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST) Foundation executive board of directors and is Chair of the Missouri Cancer Consortium (MCC), Communications Committee.



Illinois Cancer Partnership Executive Committee

The Hope Light Foundation is a pledge organization supporting the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable's "80% Screening in Every Community" initiative that campaigns for promoting 80% of people screened for colorectal cancer with a focus on rural communities, certain racial/ethnic communities and low income communities. The Foundation has helped organize and sponsor two Colorectal Cancer Roundtables, i.e., one in Illinois in 2017 and one in Missouri in 2018. In addition, the Foundation is working in partnership with the University of Chicago to expand the CDC funded Cook County CARES (Colorectal Cancer Alliance to Reinforce and Enhance Screening) program to rural Illinois communities for the purpose of promoting colorectal cancer screening and for collecting and reporting screening data. To date, the Foundation has received ten grants totaling more than \$275,000 from the University of Chicago to help fund the CARES program in rural communities and develop new skills to improve Hepatitis B disease awareness and prevention in downstate Illinois.



Colorectal Cancer Screening Event in Anna, Illinois on 4 October 2019

In 2021, the Foundation established two ovarian cancer awareness groups, i.e., the Talking Ovarian Cancer Project (TOCP) in Illinois and the Missouri Ovarian Cancer Coalition (MOCC) in Missouri. Both are pilot groups that will be developing awareness materials, conducting outreach activities and developing interventions and collecting performance to plan data during a 12 month pilot period. At the end of the pilot programs, the two groups will be developing Best Practices for implementation consideration of the programs throughout the two states. The primary mission of both groups is to communicate ovarian cancer awareness and education among women and



primary care physicians with a focus on rural communities that are medically underserved, have high poverty rates and have healthcare professional shortages especially gynecologic specialists.

The Foundation launched the first annual Hope Light Ovarian Cancer Awareness Campaign in 2020 beginning on World Ovarian Cancer Day on 8 May 2020 and continuing through the Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month in September 2020 to maximize communication of ovarian cancer signs and symptoms throughout the US with a particular focus on rural and medically underserved communities. Hope Light is a charter member of the World Ovarian Cancer Coalition that is committed to improving survival and

quality of life for women with ovarian cancer.



The Foundation received a \$3,500 grant in 2021 from GRAIL for use in ovarian cancer education and survivor support for the Talking Ovarian Cancer Project (TOCP) in the Southern Seven Health Department. GRAIL is a healthcare company focused on improving health by pioneering new Multi Cancer Early Detection (MCED) technologies for the early cancer detection of 50 cancers including ovarian cancer. The Foundation also received a \$1,000 grant from PhRMA in 2020 to support the Missouri Ovarian Cancer Coalition (MOCC).

The Foundation has continued to donate to the Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH) Foundation since 2012 to help fund construction of the SIH Cancer Institute in Carterville, Illinois. The SIH Cancer Institute opened in March 2015 as the region's first and only dedicated cancer treatment center and has become a tremendous asset to the people of Southern Illinois and the surrounding region by treating patients close to home and to their family and

friends.



SIH Check Presentation on 17 September 2015

Since 2006, the Foundation has researched, analyzed and documented cancer data statistics for Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky to help in determining communities with the greatest need for help in the fight against cancer and for targeting intervention activities.

Rudy retired in 2006 to lead the Foundation after more than 36 years in the aerospace business at McDonnell Douglas Corporation/The Boeing Company following four years



in the United States Air Force. Beverly retired from Bank of America in 2016 after 29 years of service. They reside in Hazelwood, Missouri.

The George A. Bates Memorial Foundation continues to be the major Hope Light Foundation donor that keeps the Foundation operating and the Hope Light burning!

The Hope Light Foundation believes the fight against cancer begins with knowledge and with this knowledge comes empowerment to make informed decisions on personal health matters and cancer treatment options. To make an informed decision, a person must understand the cancer; comprehend what the clinical treatment involves, including benefits, risks, limitations and alternatives; has considered personal preferences; and makes a decision consistent with these preferences and considerations. With empowerment comes strength that builds Hope; Hope for tomorrow, Hope for survivorship and Hope for a cure!

This is Rudy and Beverly's story and this is their **Hope** for each person fighting cancer!

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