For patients in treatment, there’s no place like home

The knock on the door was unexpected, as was the visitor. A year before, Bill and Leslie Patton had provided free lodging to the Dana-Farber patient, but had not heard from him since his treatment ended.

“Hi just wanted to let us know that his brain cancer was gone, and to thank us for our hospitality,” recalls Leslie Patton. “It was a very warm gesture, and reinforced why we do this.”

The Patmons are among many trained volunteers in the Hospitality Homes program who open their homes to families traveling to the Boston area for medical treatment. Founded in 1993, the organization has grown during challenging economic times – as has Dana-Farber’s participation. In 2011, for example, Hospitality Homes saw a range in DFCH patient requests, from 88 to 140, part of a 34 percent overall jump in applicant families to the program. A nonprofit organization, Hospitality Homes provides a “home away from home” for those seeking care at 25 Boston hospitals and medical centers. It was the first program of its kind in the United States. Social workers, resource specialists, nurses, and other medical professionals refers patients and their families to the program. When families apply to be guests, Hospitality Homes completes a screening process, including a reference check. Once approved, patients are matched with one of nearly 200 volunteer hosts, where they receive free, short-term housing.

Most Hospitality Homes guests have household incomes less than $55,000, so not having to pay hotel costs during treatment – even those offered at a discounted rate – is crucial. One woman whose husband was receiving cancer care wrote that the friendship she received from her host family helped her sleep and take care of herself better.

“For every family we help, we know there are countless others who shoulder crushing hospital bills or delay treatment due to lack of affordable housing,” says Hospitality Homes Executive Director Caryl Goodman, PhD.

What makes the Patmons unique among Hospitality Homes hosts is that their house, a 1910-era Arts and Crafts-style home across a park and about a mile from Dana-Farber’s Longwood Avenue campus, was owned for nearly 30 years by DFCH Founder Sidney Farber, MD, and his wife, Norma. The couple bought the house in late 1939 after Farber passed it one day on his drive to work at Boston’s Children’s Hospital, and they raised three children there as he founded and expanded the institute known today as Dana-Farber.

Enjoying this neat coincidence, the Patmons say they were more drawn to the program after purchasing their house in 2004 as a way of offsetting the costs of maintenance.

Gettleman, McCullough, Willi assume expanded leadership roles

Three Dana-Farber staff were recently promoted to operational leadership roles. “Given the breadth of functions now aligned within Institute Operations, a restructuring of department reporting relationships was necessary to ensure we are best positioned to deliver the highest quality services to our patients, visitors, and colleagues,” says Maria Popola, senior vice president of Operations.

New roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- Wendy Gettleman was named vice president of Facilities Management and Real Estate. In her new role, she will manage Dana building renovations and major capital construction at the Longwood Center, ensure continuity of plant operations for all DFCH sites, and oversee the opening of new cafe conversions on Dana 1 and Veckey 1. Reporting to Gettleman are Facilities Maintenance and Operations; Planning, Design, and Construction; Real Estate; Facilities Business Services, including General Services and Energy Management; and Food Services.

- Gettleman joined Dana-Farber in 2005 as senior project manager for the Veckey project team.

- Melissa McCullough is now senior director of Environmental Health and Safety. She will oversee the assessment and mitigation of environmental, health, safety, and security risks throughout the Institute. McCullough will continue to serve as the Institute safety officer. In her expanded role, she will provide guidance on key Dana-Farber priorities, such as promoting a culture of safety, implementing safety operating practices in the Longwood Center planning and design, enhancing chemical safety and storage protocols, and facilitating organizational preparedness for emergencies.

- McCullough joined DFCH in 1997 as an Environmental Health and Safety specialist and has also served as manager of Environmental Compliance, assistant director of Environmental Health and Safety, and, most recently, director of Environmental Health and Safety.

- John Willi was named senior director of Supply Chain Management. In this role, Willi will continue to lead the Materials Management program while also assuming responsibility for The Friends’ Corner Gift Shop, Friends’ Place, and Friends of Dana-Farber. Willi will also serve as liaison to the Kraft Family Blood Donor Center at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women’s Hospital to ensure ease of patient access and efficient procurement of blood products.

Willi joined Dana-Farber in 2008 as director of Materials Management.

Human Resources moves to main campus

On Dec. 8, 2012, the Human Resources (HR) Department will relocate to the main campus, with offices in the Dana and Mayer buildings.

HR reception will be located with Occupational Health Services, on the first floor of the Dana building (DA-1A).

Telephone and fax numbers will remain the same:
- Tel: 617-632-3052
- Fax: 617-632-4421

Please refer to the following new address for future correspondence: Mayer & Dana buildings (DA-1A & MA-1A)
440 Brookline Ave., Boston, MA

Please join us for an open house in December at our new location.

Details to follow on DFCH Online.