



ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

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### **\$500,000 Given to Center Dedicated to Young Women with Breast Cancer at CINJ**

*Donation from the Val Skinner Foundation Brings Total Support Over Eight Years to Over \$2.5 Million*

**New Brunswick, N.J., October 28, 2008** –A facility at New Jersey’s only Comprehensive Cancer Center designated by the National Cancer Institute, dedicated to addressing the needs of young women with breast cancer will benefit from a \$500,000 donation recently given by the Val Skinner Foundation. Through the efforts of Ladies Professional Golf Association veteran Val Skinner, monies raised from two high-profile golfing events will support the LIFE Center at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ). CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

The LIFE (LPGA In the Fight to Eradicate breast cancer) Center was founded in 2000, as it was recognized that younger females battling the disease were becoming a growing population. It features a multidisciplinary team of medical oncologists, surgeons, genetic counselors, nurse practitioners, social workers, psychologists, and other health care professionals to help address the specific needs of young breast cancer patients. Many of the team’s experts are involved in developing innovative education programs to assist teens and young women in being more proactive in their breast health. They also are engaged in cutting-edge research to unlock the mysteries of why breast cancer affects a number of younger women. Numerous services are also offered through the LIFE Center including genetic counseling and testing.

Since its inception, the LIFE Center has received more than \$2.5 million in support from the Val Skinner Foundation, whose namesake was the driving force behind the Center’s creation following the death of a close friend to breast cancer. Ms. Skinner notes it is imperative that more focus be placed on breast cancer awareness in young women, “As CINJ expands LIFE Center services to more of its Network hospitals across New Jersey and one of its education programs to South Carolina, CINJ is positioning itself as a national leader in this area. The Val Skinner Foundation is pleased to support such efforts that will have a far-reaching impact.”

Deborah Toppmeyer, MD, director, New Jersey Comprehensive Breast Care Center at CINJ and associate professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the director of the LIFE Center. She says it is a privilege to partner with the LPGA veteran in order to make Skinner’s mission a reality, noting for instance, the opportunity to expand the BioCONNECT educational program to high schools in South Carolina. She also notes this is just a first step to making a national impact that will not only increase science literacy, but also potentially change behavior that will affect breast cancer mortality.

BioCONNECT is just one of the many initiatives put forth by the LIFE Center. The program is a science-based curriculum, developed in collaboration with the UMDNJ-School of Public Health, which was pilot tested in 24 New Jersey high schools last year. The interactive program looks at the biology of breast cancer through the eyes of fictitious teenage twins, whose mother is diagnosed with the disease. Students learn about breast cancer and breast health through the twin’s website and blog.

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Dr. Toppmeyer notes many dreams of the LIFE Center are now an unfolding reality, “Because of the generous support of the Val Skinner Foundation, our dedicated professionals at the LIFE Center are making a tremendous difference to an entire generation of women, and hopefully their daughters. Without such commitment, we would not be afforded such a critical opportunity to educate them about overall breast health and assist them with breast cancer-related needs.”

CINJ is grateful to the LIFE partners which helped to make this donation possible. These include: the Joe Plumeri Family, Merrill Lynch, Emblem Health, Guy Carpenter, QualCare, Roche, Mildred Wood, Jean Ladd, Margo Hyde, Newell and Martha Bolton, Edgar and Marjorie Backlund and Libby Cherrington. Notable contributors, Assured Guaranty, Commerce Bank, The ACE Group and Johnson & Johnson, also champion the LIFE Event and its mission.

### **About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey**

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is the state’s first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ’s physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Partner Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital\*, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, JFK Medical Center, Morristown Memorial Hospital, Overlook Hospital, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ-Hamilton), Saint Peter’s University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School\*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. \*Academic Affiliate

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