Meet Jolie

Jolie, Certified Therapy Dog and Marlene Csunyo, Pet Therapy Volunteer.

Hi, my name is Jolie and I am an Australian labradoodle. I am one of the certified therapy dogs at Moffitt Cancer Center. I would like to tell you a little about how I came to Moffitt and my job here. I am a volunteer which means I don’t get paid, but that’s okay because I really love my what I do!

My mom, Marlene, adopted me when I was just eight weeks old. She is a retired nurse and wanted to continue helping people. That’s where I come in. She said I was a natural therapy dog since I love everyone.

First, I had to learn manners, like not jumping on people or stealing their food. Then I had to pass a special test with Project PUP to see if I qualified. It was a hard test, but I passed! Next, my mom called Moffitt about volunteering in the Pet Therapy Program. We had to interview just like human volunteers. After passing with flying colors, we started volunteering in November of 2019.

You may wonder, “What does a therapy dog do?” The answer is simple: I bring joy and comfort to those who need it. I can sense when someone needs me. One day, when we were walking down the hallway at Moffitt, I saw an elderly woman in a wheelchair with her son pushing her. My mom said she was on oxygen and I knew she needed me.

Continues on page 2
When something unexpected happened, my grandmother would say, “Oh well, there’s always a first time for everything!” As a youngster, I didn’t truly comprehend the meaning of the adage until the day that my bicycle hit a stone resulting in an unexpected flight over the handlebars, a black eye and three sutures. This was certainly not a first that I wished to repeat!

I’ve been fortunate to experience and celebrate many firsts. However, it never occurred to me that one of these firsts would not be a cause for celebration. In January 2014, I received a cancer diagnosis. It wasn’t the best news, but then again, it wasn’t the worst either. Little did I know that becoming a Moffitt patient would not only provide me with the best treatment possible, but it would also provide me with one of the greatest opportunities of my life.

In 2015, I joined the Patient and Family Advisory Program as a volunteer patient advisor. Hands down, this must be one of the greatest opportunities that I have ever been given. In 2016, I was invited to join the Patient and Family Advisory Council and for the past four years, it has been my great honor to serve as co-chair. Although my term end is fast approaching, I have been honored with an emeritus membership so that I may continue to support our patients and families.

My favorite volunteer assignment is to present the Patient and Family Orientation for our new patients to prepare them for their first appointment. The orientation provides a general overview and includes tips on navigating our many campuses and clinics. Most importantly, the orientation provides patients with information on the supportive programs and services available during a patient’s cancer journey.

I wish you all a very safe and happy holiday season!

Moffitt offers flexible options for joining the Patient and Family Advisory Council, including attending meetings virtually. To learn more, please email PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org or call 813-745-2963.

Shani Parkin

Meet Jolie

I walked right up to her and laid my head on her lap. The woman hugged me and began to cry. My mom asked if she was okay. “Yes, I’m just overwhelmed,” she replied. I was so happy to comfort this woman. I also bring stress relief to the nurses and team members. Most of them know me by name. Sometimes the nurses hug me and say, “Jolie, I really needed you today.”

I visit waiting rooms and patients on Tuesdays. If you see me, please come say hello. I can’t wait to meet you!

If you are interested in having your furry friend volunteer at Moffitt, contact Volunteer Services at 813-745-2254 or email VolunteerServices@Moffitt.org for more information.
Meet the Moffitt Pet Therapy Dogs

My name is Madison. When not volunteering, I am: Relaxing on the back porch and watching the wildlife while knowing that I made a PAWsitive difference in someone’s life.

My name is Teddy. Why I volunteer: I am not a “volunteer.” I am a paid professional who wears a tie because Moffitt does not have casual Thursday. My job is to get petted and I get paid in treats. I light up a room with smiles and laughter as I stand up and await my paycheck. Once paid, I look around for the next person to pet me so I can get paid again!

My name is Finlay, which is Gaelic for white-haired warrior. Favorite food: I really like fish! I won’t beg, but I’ll stare at you until I get some.

My name is Rocky. Favorite food: Cheese — I can’t see it, but I can smell it a mile away!

My name is Madison. When not volunteering, I am: Relaxing on the back porch and watching the wildlife while knowing that I made a PAWsitive difference in someone’s life.

My name is Feller Bruno. Why I volunteer: I volunteer because I love being part of the Moffitt patient experience. I proudly wear my Patient Experience button when I’m volunteering.

If you would like to request a visit from a Moffitt Pet Therapy dog, please contact the Volunteer Services office at 813-745-2254.

In loving memory of JoJo — Pet Therapy dog and beloved companion. JoJo and Kayba have been volunteering at Moffitt since 2020. JoJo was known to put smiles on the faces of every patient, caregiver and team member she met.

Our names are JoJo and Kayba. About JoJo: I love to ride in the golf cart. About Kayba: I like hanging out with family.
CAREGIVER CORNER

The Holiday of Lights and Heroes

David Dauman, Patient Advisor, Patient and Family Advisory Council

Candles are important to many religions and cultures. In my faith of Judaism, candles are a big part of the holiday Chanukah. This special holiday celebrates a heroic battle for religious freedom, highlighted by the miracle of a single day’s ration of oil lasting for eight days. Gifts are exchanged and candles are lit.

During December 2014, I was at Moffitt undergoing a second stem cell transplant for multiple myeloma. I was surrounded by heroes. My unrelated donor and the couriers from Be The Match®, a nonprofit marrow registry, were heroes, as were the many Moffitt team members who cared for me during this trying time. The biggest hero was my wife, Rona.

That month we celebrated my daughter’s third birthday along with Chanukah for her and her four-year-old brother. Candles lit those dark days and nights for my family. Due to the isolation precautions for transplant patients, I could only see their joy via a tablet. I can certainly empathize with how recent patients and families must have felt during the visitor restrictions throughout the pandemic.

Every day for a month, my wife maintained our kids’ routines while battling two hours of traffic back and forth to see me. They never went without their mommy, and I never went without the sustaining gift of my wife’s touch. Her bravery of not folding from this daily burden while facing the real possibility of becoming a widow and single parent was beyond valiant.

With each passing Chanukah with my cancer in check, I think back to her heroism as I watch the candles burn and my kids grow. I think about each year’s gift of life and love as an annual bonus, as we were not sure how many more we could expect back then.

As we reach this year-end and holiday season, may I wish you a year of health, peace and light. And many hugs for and from your heroes.

Many caregivers often find themselves putting the well-being of the patient before their own. At Moffitt, we offer many services to help caregivers including the Family and Friends Support Group. To learn more visit Moffitt.org/SupportGroups or call 813-745-8407. To learn about Be The Match®, visit BeTheMatch.org.

MEET THE EXPERTS

Connect with Moffitt experts and learn helpful information for patients and caregivers. Sessions held via Zoom on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10-10:30 a.m.

To register please visit Moffitt.org/MeettheExperts or call 813-745-1690.
UPCOMING EVENTS

December – February

Virtual Relaxation/Meditation for Stress Relief
813-745-6052
Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only
Weds. at 12:15 p.m.
PatientWellness@Moffitt.org

Virtual Gentle Restorative Yoga Class
813-745-6052
Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only
Tues. at 11 a.m. and Thurs. at 2 p.m.
PatientWellness@Moffitt.org

Magnolia Open Art Studio
In person, Moffitt’s Magnolia Campus
3rd floor – Arts in Medicine Studio
Mon.-Fri., 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

McKinley Open Art Studio
In person, Moffitt’s McKinley Campus
1st floor – Patient and Family Center
Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Patient and Family Orientation
813-745-1690
Virtual and in person, RSVP only
Mon.-Fri., 2 p.m. or by appointment
PatientLibrary@Moffitt.org

Virtual Meet the Experts
813-745-1690
Virtual/Zoom, RSVP only
Tues. and Weds., 10-10:30 a.m.
PatientLibrary@Moffitt.org

PATIENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

For your convenience, we offer support groups via Zoom. To learn more about support groups or to register, visit Moffitt.org/SupportGroups or call the Social Work office at 813-745-8407.

General Cancer Support Group
Weekly meeting for patients diagnosed with any cancer type to connect and share mutual support. Meets every Tuesday, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom.

Family and Friends Support Group
Weekly meeting for families and caregivers of patients with any cancer type to connect and share mutual support. Meets every Wednesday, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom.

Metastatic Breast Cancer Support Group
Meet with people who have been diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer to share mutual support. Meets every Tuesday, 11 a.m.-12 p.m. via Zoom.

Breast Cancer Connection
Monthly support group for anyone who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. Meets the first Tuesday of every month, 6-7 p.m. via Zoom.

Families First: Parenting During Cancer
A support group for parents raising young children and teens while living with cancer. Meets every Wednesday, 4-5 p.m. via Zoom.

Survivorship Program Support Group
Monthly meeting for Survivorship Program participants to connect and share mutual support. Meets the last Tuesday of every month, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom.

Quit Smoking Support Group
Monthly meeting for patients and household members who want to quit tobacco, share insights and find mutual support. Meets the last Tuesday of every month, 1-2 p.m. via Zoom.

Finding Our Way Through Loss and Grief
This is an 8-week support group for family and caregivers who have lost a loved one to cancer while under treatment at Moffitt.
Cancer is a challenging journey. Listed are some activities to indulge in that can bring us joy and peace. Hopefully you’ll discover one to try.

“Relaxation and meditation is one of the many beneficial programs available for Moffitt cancer patients, family members and caregivers. As a Moffitt patient, I was introduced to this class in April of 2021. I look forward to participating in this class every Wednesday where I can meditate in the comfort of my own home via Zoom. This meditation class helps me relax and deal with the every day stresses in life, which can be numerous when dealing with cancer, treatments and surgeries. The facilitator has such a calm, soothing voice and every session leaves me in a completely relaxed state of mind. A huge thank you to the Moffitt staff, this amazing program and the warm, loving and inviting facilitator of this class!”
— Joanne Reece, Moffitt Patient

**Fishing** can be both relaxing and exciting at the same time. Fishing can also be challenging and may require some skill. However, when we achieve a new skillset, it builds our confidence, sense of accomplishment and may result in a healthy dinner!

**Mindfulness** helps us to quiet the busy mind and focus our attention on the present moment. Incorporating gratitude in the practice heightens our state of well-being. Gratitude is linked with positive emotions including contentment and hope. List three good things to be grateful for every day.

**Music** can ease anxiety, reduce stress, bring happy memories and light up the creative side of our brains. This practice can include listening to our favorite tunes or brushing up on our musical abilities. Tunes can also calm preoperative jitters and help us find our peaceful place.

**Painting** can be soothing to the soul. This may include canvas painting, pottery painting or painting a room! We don’t have to be a professional painter to enjoy the benefits of this activity.

**Reading and poetry** can be very relaxing and can take our minds off stressful situations by transporting us to new adventures through our imagination.

**Walking** is one of the best habits to practice! It improves physical health and stimulates the production of feel-good brain chemicals. Walking in nature is also a natural healer. Research shows that nature therapy, known as ecotherapy, can improve mood, reduce stress and build confidence.
Moffitt offers many programs and resources that support wellbeing. Be sure to visit the Arts In Medicine studios that offers origami, Zentangle, string painting, weaving, bead making, coloring and journaling. Our Integrative Medicine team also offers yoga, mindfulness, massage and more. Please be advised that there may be additional fees for these services. If insured, please consult your plan. We hope that you can take advantage of these services and discover new habits that work best for you.

To learn more about Moffitt’s Arts In Medicine Program, email ArtsInMedicine@Moffitt.org or call Patient and Family Services at 813-745-8407. For more information about Integrative Medicine Services, email PatientWellness@Moffitt.org or call 813-745-6052.

“One of the most powerful ways that journaling has helped me is by getting my thoughts, feelings, doubts and fears out of my head and onto a harmless piece of paper. When all of that chaos is written down in front of me and literally in my hands, it all seems less scary, more manageable, and I have more control over it. I can even rip it all up if I choose!”

— Robin Gordon, Patient Advisor, Patient and Family Advisory Program

“My yoga and meditation practice has had the single most positive impact on my quality of life during cancer treatment. It’s responsible for turning my outlook around after a difficult diagnosis. Working with Sharen Lock, Moffitt’s yoga therapist and patient wellness coordinator, I’ve learned to adjust my practice to address different side effects, both mental and physical. It’s something I can always do to honor and care for myself no matter how I’m feeling.”

— Robin Hesselink, Living with Metastatic Breast Cancer

“Moffitt’s Arts In Medicine program provided a creative distraction during my cancer journey. The calm and peaceful environment allowed me to create while waiting between appointments. My children spent time painting and coloring while I was in surgery. They turned their worry and concerns into art and beauty. Moffitt treats the mind and soul of the patient, as well as healing their bodies.”

— Norma Lyons, Two Time Breast Cancer Survivor
The Cost of Cancer: How Moffitt is Helping

Deborah Vicedo, Business Office Manager

At Moffitt Cancer Center, we recognize that each patient has a unique financial situation. Cancer treatment can be expensive, and we understand that some patients may need extra help managing the cost. Moffitt has several resource options available for these patients.

In addition to offering a three-month internal payment plan for families, we also offer extended payment arrangements through our partner company, AccessOne. For an added convenience, once enrolled in the payment plan, all new outstanding balances will automatically be added to the payment plan. Patients can view details of the newly added charges on their Moffitt patient portal.

We also offer varying levels of financial assistance for those who qualify. To expedite the process, our financial assistance application process can be completed through a text link that allows patients to upload their documents for a real-time transfer of information. Moffitt Cancer Center’s Business Office assists patients who want to apply for Medicaid or Social Security disability. We will be their guide through the process and help answer questions.

“At the end of 2018, I was faced with one more scan. It was the holiday season and my treatments were over, but I had one more test. I decided to wait until January 2019. When the scan came back negative, I was so happy. That was, until the end of January when I received a bill for $4,000. If I had done the scan in December, as was originally scheduled, I wouldn’t have been charged anything as my deductible had been met for the year. I reached out to Moffitt’s Business Office to see if I qualified for assistance. They made every effort possible to try to secure financial aid for me. Everyone in the Business Office was so supportive, helpful and understanding."

— Cathy Shaffer, Patient Advisor, Patient and Family Advisory Program

Moffitt Cancer Center strives to be transparent with our pricing and wants patients to be well-informed regarding the cost of care. To help patients understand their potential treatment expenses, a good faith estimate can be provided prior to having a service performed. Moffitt has provided an estimate tool on our website that lists a wide range of common medical services. The estimate tool helps patients calculate their estimated out-of-pocket expense for upcoming procedures. We encourage insured patients to reach out to their insurance provider prior to having services performed to fully understand their plan benefits for co-payments, deductibles and co-insurance.

To request an estimate, contact Moffitt’s Patient Account Resolution team at 813-745-8422 (select option 1) or the Financial Clearance Unit at 813-745-7300.
HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Nutrition to Boost Your Immunity

Lindsey Montgomery, Registered Dietitian

Proper nutrition is an important part of cancer prevention, treatment, recovery and survival. Before making changes to your diet, please consult your health care team or Moffitt’s Nutrition Therapy Department.

The immune system is a complex network of systems that helps us fight off infections and remain healthy. As it helps us, we have to do our part to help it stay strong and healthy as well. This involves many things and not all of these are in our control. However, we can control some things, like minimizing stress, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and eating healthy.

Healthy eating plays a key role in supporting our immune system. When it comes to immunity, our food choices have a big impact. Research shows that 70-80% of the immune system is in the gastrointestinal tract. This is why what we eat has a direct impact on our immune system. Despite what popular diet fads tell you, there is not one specific “superfood” or nutrient that should be solely relied on for building immunity. Rather a balanced diet with plenty of variety, color, plant-based foods, whole grains and adequate protein is recommended.

Fiber is also important because, when broken down in our gastrointestinal tract, the immune cells there use it for energy. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choosing plant-based foods that provide a good variety of color and fiber ensures that we are getting plenty of vitamins and minerals, which are important for new cell growth and maintaining cellular function.

This may feel like a lot to digest (dietitian pun intended), but the message is simple: Eat the rainbow of color with a focus on plant-based foods. Include a wide variety of foods. Choose fresh foods often, but include foods that are prepared in different ways too. If you would like more information about nutrition and immune health, please reach out to Moffitt’s Nutrition Therapy Department or speak to a member of your health care team.

For more information about nutrition, please visit Moffitt.org/Nutrition or call 813-745-3609.

Moffitt’s Patient and Family Advisory Council is seeking members from diverse and underrepresented communities. Help us ensure all voices are represented and heard by Moffitt leadership.

Contact 813-745-2963 or email PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org to learn more.

Your Voice MATTERS
The Specialty Pharmacy: What You Need to Know

Sophia Alfonso, Pharmacy Manager

As part of your treatment plan, your health care team may prescribe chemotherapy for you to take at home. Moffitt Cancer Center’s Specialty Pharmacy focuses on providing these medications while also providing you with excellent customer service and specialty support. Learn more about our services in our frequently asked questions below.

What is the Specialty Pharmacy?
A specialty pharmacy provides complex medications, usually requiring special storage and handling that may not be available at your local pharmacy. Moffitt’s Specialty Pharmacy was established in 2012 with a vision that puts patients first and provides expert pharmaceutical care for the growing number of oral cancer treatments. The Specialty Pharmacy achieved an important distinction this past summer, earning full accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Health Care. This is proof that our Specialty Pharmacy meets the high standards designed to promote excellent patient care.

How is the Specialty Pharmacy different from my local pharmacy?
The specialty pharmacists are a dedicated and caring part of your clinical health care team. To better serve you, we perform a thorough review of labs, existing health conditions, and any medications you may be taking to avoid any negative interactions. We can schedule individualized counseling sessions with you to provide education on the dosage, directions and storage of your medication. Additionally, we will explain how to handle missed doses and side effects. We follow up routinely to ensure you can take medications as prescribed and are not experiencing adverse reactions.

What if I cannot afford my medication?
In addition to our team of highly qualified pharmacists, the Specialty Pharmacy’s certified pharmacy technicians serve as an integral part of your treatment team. Their expertise lies in working with an insured patient’s insurance company to obtain financial approval. The pharmacy technicians understand the critical nature of these medications and work hard to expedite the insurance approval process. If you and your family find your medications to be unaffordable, our pharmacy technicians can guide you through the financial assistance process to lower these barriers as well.

How can I find and contact the Specialty Pharmacy?
The Specialty Pharmacy is located at Moffitt’s Magnolia Campus on the ground floor by the cafeteria. To contact Moffitt’s Specialty Pharmacy, call 813-745-7354 or email PharmSpecialty@Moffitt.org. A licensed pharmacist is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to discuss urgent matters.
My journey started back in 2019 when I made a call to my doctor as I was having some unusual bowel symptoms. After an initial appointment, my doctor made it seem like it wasn’t a big deal. So, I also brushed it off. I had other things to worry about, like having another baby. We were told it would be nearly impossible to have another child, but in May of 2020, I became pregnant! Throughout the pregnancy, the symptoms with my bowels became more alarming. Something felt off. I decided to make another appointment with my doctor. I was met with the same aloof response, blaming the symptoms on my pregnancy. I fought for a referral to a gastrointestinal specialist. The specialist went through a round of tests and recommended a colonoscopy. I scheduled my colonoscopy for March of 2021 when my daughter was only 6 weeks old.

The first cancer moment I had was waking up after my colonoscopy. I saw my husband in the room and my heart sank. Since it was during the pandemic, he wasn’t supposed to be in the room. Once I was alert, they told us that they had found a mass. After meeting with a few more doctors, we were faced with the realization that I had stage 3 rectal cancer. It felt like the wind was taken out of me and everything went black for a moment. It felt like the doctors were talking to someone else. Once I got over the initial shock, I told myself, “I will get through it because I have to get through it. I have two children that need me.”

Halfway through my treatment, my husband and I decided that life is too short to wait to make a big move. We always dreamed of retiring somewhere warm, so we decided on Florida. As soon as I said Tampa to my oncologists in Wisconsin, they immediately started raving about Moffitt Cancer Center. I soon found out that they weren’t wrong. I finished the last four rounds of chemotherapy along with my ileostomy and removal surgery at Moffitt. I couldn’t have asked for a better team of doctors and nurses, including Dr. Julian Sanchez who performed my ileostomy removal surgery.

Many people ask me how cancer changed my life. It changed in many ways. Prior to my diagnosis, I was a “workaholic.” My diagnosis taught me that some work can wait until tomorrow. I also tell myself to live life for today. If you want to go on vacation, do it. If you want to buy the $30 bottle of wine instead of the $15 bottle, do it. Does your kid want to spend the weekend at the beach? Go with them. Since my diagnosis, I have also learned that ridding your body of “emotional cancers” is important too. So, if there was a part of my life that was causing unnecessary stress, I got rid of it.

My biggest advice to people going through it is simply that cancer is a tough thing to deal with. You should cry, scream and just be plain mad about it. It’s important to recognize these feelings and release them. Also, you know your body best. Always continue to fight and be an advocate for yourself.

Finally, I hope that I can be an inspiration, a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear for others. I have learned so much in this journey. I would love to share these lessons with others that may be going through this same struggle.

Moffitt offers support groups where you can talk with people who have experienced cancer. Please call the department of Social Work at 813-745-8407 or visit Moffitt.org/SupportGroups to learn about the support groups that are available.
Are You a Young Adult Living with Cancer?

Networking Socials: Connect with other young adults in the Tampa Bay area.

Meet the Experts AYA Edition: Learn more about topics relevant to young adults as well as resources available to you.

To learn more: Moffitt.org/AYA | AYA@Moffitt.org | 813-745-4736

Patient and Family Orientation

Learn how to:
- CONNECT WITH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
- PARTNER WITH YOUR CARE TEAM
- FIND YOUR WAY AROUND MOFFITT

- Virtual sessions presented at 2 p.m. on weekdays
- In-person sessions offered upon request
- Each session offers a 30-minute presentation with Q&A
- Presented in English and Spanish
- View online at MOFFITT.org/Orientation

813-745-1690 | Orientation@Moffitt.org

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If you would like to be involved in making Moffitt the best it can be for all patients and families, contact the Patient and Family Advisory Program at PatientAdvisors@Moffitt.org or 813-745-2963.