The Summer PROFILES in EXCELLENCE Edition
There are literally hundreds, and probably thousands, of items emblazoned with one of the myriad colored ribbons representing awareness of the equally myriad kinds of cancers. The grandmother of them all is Susan G. Komen for the Cure’s use of the pink ribbon for breast cancer survivors and then for breast cancer awareness. No other cancer campaign has achieved the ubiquity of the pink ribbon but there is blue for prostate, dark blue for colon, white for lung, emerald green for liver, grey for brain, black for melanoma, orange for leukemia, burgundy for multiple myeloma, teal/pink/blue for thyroid, and even plum indicating caregiver. Have we reached the saturation point?

Lorraine Jensen, manager of the gift shop at Bayfront Health in Brooksville, Fla., said there may be an element of burn-out. She buys mostly from Kelli’s Wholesale and said they have a lot of pink ribbon items and she has carried them in the past but they are not good sellers for her. Jensen said, “It’s like the Red Hatters. That sold hot for a while but now you can’t find it.” She’s got some pink ribbon earrings on the sale table but they still haven’t sold. Jensen acknowledged that she has a small shop, about 350 square feet, and does less than $50,000 annually – mostly in candles, balloons and a little plush. The hospital does not have a designated cancer center.

On the other hand, Thibodeaux Regional Medical Center in Thibodeaux, La., does have a cancer center but the 2,400-square-foot gift shop serves the entire hospital. Manager/Buyer Rhoda Caldwell doesn’t carry a whole lot of cancer specific items and said that sales of these things seem to go in spurts, but acknowledges that pink ribbon sells the most because it’s pushed more. She said that she used to carry things like totes, throws, pencils but not anymore. Now she pretty much limits the ribbon items to the colored bracelets (the majority of their sales in this category), mugs and cups, charms, and a little bit of jewelry. She said even T-shirts don’t sell as well as they used to. Caldwell said, “I feel like we’ve carried it all but pink is so much more organized.” They do have success with a generic lapel angel; it’s a popular small gift for a patient who has completed treatment and gets to have the bell ringing ceremony. The hospital will have awareness campaigns and encourage everyone to

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Soul Story – a program designed so retail customers can build a bracelet or necklace with their own personal look. They select from a wide variety of affordable Made in USA sterling silver-finished charms, bracelets and necklaces to design their piece.

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Changes Generating Sales (From page 70)

Wear blue for colon cancer for example. The gift shop provides the door prizes for the hospital’s fundraiser for the cancer center, the Beast Feast.

St. Mary’s Medical Center in Langhorne, Pa., has two gift shops. The Bee Hive is the regular shop and the Bee Well Boutique opened in October 2016 for patients and visitors to the cancer center. They do head shaves and sell wigs, prosthetics, bras and more. Manager Lynn Carpenter said she does sell pink ribbon items but is careful not to overdo it as she gets comments about other cancers being overlooked. She has wrist bands and pins in every color and some jewelry. Right now, she has a pink ribbon notebook and Silly Stylus for tablets (the head is a mop for cleaning screens).

She leans a bit to the generic, instead of specific cancers, and carries plum sweatshirts and T-shirts with all the cancer ribbons on the front as well as lavender shirts for survivors.

The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, N.J., has a separate cancer center in a nearby town that has its own gift shop run by consultants. The 1,100-square-foot shop, Kurth Cottage Gift Shop, at the Ridgewood campus offers just a few cancer-specific items like lanyards, a little jewelry, and angel stickpins. Kurth cottage is a fundraiser for the hospital’s auxiliary and Manager Andrea Delmont said she tries to keep the atmosphere upbeat and inspirational. She has recently partnered with the new Integrative Healing Arts Department to have a section in the store to support their work. In that area she stocks things like journals, inspirational books, signs and sayings, lotions, Blessings...
Bracelets and other inspirational jewelry. New items that she is carrying in that theme are scarves with inspirational sayings on the hangtags and with the same message as part of the scarf design, as well as small boxes with battery-powered lights that shine through an inspirational message.

“This is a daily fundraiser disguised as a store,” said Manager Andrea Delmont about Kurth Cottage Gift Shop at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, N.J. The shop is a nonprofit run by the hospital Auxiliary which has made a $1.5 million pledge to The Valley Health Child & Adolescent Mental Health Program and in-home hospice care for seriously ill children. Every cent the shop earns goes toward meeting that pledge. Delmont said that with the rise in internet shopping, no store can afford to wait for shoppers to come to them; you must get out into the community and let them know who you are.

With that goal in mind, Delmont did 13 outside events last year and already had five scheduled this year before the end of March. She partnered with a Jewish sisterhood organization which has a pledge to a local food bank to co-host a fashion show. She reached out to the hospital’s home care case manager and offered to do outreach to assisted living facilities. She uses residents and maybe employees as models, styles and dresses them, and has a volunteer make-up artist. She holds the events on Saturdays so families can come. She may hand out coupons for the shop and all items are for sale. Another facility organized a bus trip to the shop and included lunch on site. These events will often get good coverage in local publications and bring more awareness to the store and the pledge. She will attend some of the 20-plus Auxiliary chapter meetings in 20-plus towns to talk about what’s new and bring in a few items to show off.

Within the hospital, she offers private sales to individual departments. The Engineering Department made her a Wheel of Fortune wheel and people can spin and get free merchandise. She opens two hours early so the department has uninterrupted private shopping. She offers department heads the opportunity to browse her catalogs and order through her at discount for employee gifts that they won’t have seen in the shop already. She also special orders through the florist with whom the shop has a relationship. There is an Auxiliary newsletter that reaches over 3,000 people and gift shop news is included.

Delmont has been with Kurth Cottage for 14 years after 25 years as a corporate buyer and calls this the best job she’s ever had. She said the store is a comfort zone for people waiting for hours and worried about loved ones. Her goals are to promote the Auxiliary’s pledge and make people feel good. Kurth Cottage Gift Shop is “Where Buying Means Giving.”

At the Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, N.J., the Kurth Cottage Gift Shop’s atmosphere is upbeat and inspirational. This sign is placed throughout the store to remind shoppers how their purchases benefit patients.