

## Deep Friendship Inspires a Couple's Generosity

Marydean Martin and Charlie Silvestri have been supporters of Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health since its inception. The Ruvo and Silvestri families were neighbors for years. Their close friendship created a natural connection to the center.



*Charlie Silvestri and Marydean Martin*

After Lou Ruvo was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Ms. Martin and Mr. Silvestri watched him transform from a charming, active, successful business owner into a confused individual with no memory of his former self. They also saw Mr. Ruvo's outgoing wife, Angie, become a full-time captive of Alzheimer's disease as a caregiver until his death in 1994.

Ms. Martin and Mr. Silvestri's first contribution to the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health comprised books to be given to family caregivers, supplementing the 1,500 books and DVDs available for checkout from the center's Lynne Ruffin-Smith Library. The books that the pair donated explained what to expect and how to handle the changes in patients' behavior as brain disease progresses.

When the couple decided to honor Ms. Martin's parents, they asked the Keep

Memory Alive philanthropy team for suggestions. The staff made a list of items that the Sherry and Bruce Layne Patient Suite Infusion Room needed to enhance the patient experience.

The result was a fund that would provide:

- **iPads** for patients to use during infusion treatments
- **Mobile library cart** with materials for the enjoyment of patients in the infusion room and throughout the facility
- **Meal vouchers** for patients with more than four consecutive hours of appointments
- **Comfort items**, such as blankets and snacks, for patients in infusion and imaging
- **Transportation assistance** for patients with demonstrated need. Transportation stood out, given its correlation with effective disease management.

According to the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health staff, patients who miss a treatment due to lack of transportation can experience a decline in health.

Today, the Vassie & Charles R. Martin Patient Experience Fund is very well received by patients.

"I've been coming here for infusion treatment over five years, and now I feel like a child looking forward to snack time," says Demenica Jackson. "I adore my infusion nurse, Jeri, and I'm very appreciative for the juices, coffee and snacks that are offered during treatment."

Mr. Silvestri says, "We hope a cure for Alzheimer's disease will be found in the near future. In the interim, we will continue to support Keep Memory Alive and the work of the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health. We hope the community will join us."

*Demenica Jackson with Jeri Mapanao, RN*



## You Can Help Our Patients

As the Vassie & Charles R. Martin Patient Experience Fund grows, so will the benefits to patients. With additional financial support, the offering may expand to include legal services for patients and caregivers, valet and parking assistance, and more.

If you are interested in supporting this important program, please contact our Philanthropy Department at 702.263.9797 or [DonateNevada@ccf.org](mailto:DonateNevada@ccf.org).

## A Fond Farewell to a Faithful Friend

Our volunteer canine greeter, Jordan, passed away peacefully at home in March at the age of 12, just two and a half weeks after a diagnosis of liver cancer with metastasis.

Jordan was loved by all of us at Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health. She was a calming presence to even our most anxious visitors, bringing joy to employees, family caregivers and patients alike, who referred to her as the “Ruvo dog.” She received a presidential pat on the head from George W. Bush during his 2010 visit, with lively discussion about springer spaniels and the “White House dog,” Millie.

Since the center opened in 2009, Jordan and her human, Donna Achrem, volunteered on Wednesdays, greeting Lunch & Learn attendees, bringing caregivers to the second floor for the memory loss support group and escorting patients to appointments.

Jordan enhanced visitors’ experience, patiently welcoming all human contact, from pats on the head to belly rubs, and she could be counted on to show off a new trick or two. As a proper Vegas dog, card tricks were among her favorites. During her breaks, she could often be found with her paws on the counter at the Keep Memory Alive Café, inquiring about treats.

Jordan will be sorely missed because she touched so many of us. We remember her fondly and will always be grateful for the time she and Donna Achrem gave us.



*Donna Achrem with Jordan*

