

# A Love Letter for McLeod Legacies



*“Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you.” -- S.L. Alder*

We all want a place where our life stories matter ... our voices heard ... our work is celebrated ... our failures embraced ... our hopes unleashed. A place where we can use our energies and resources to truly impact others. Thirty-seven years ago, as a newlywed, I was lured from Greenville, SC, by my husband, Rob, to work here in our early twenties. We had “planned” on being here for five years or less! Wonderfully, we chose to stay, and McLeod has become one of life’s most cherished “places” on so many levels. Yet, it isn’t merely a place, our McLeod community has become like family. Generously, many of you have etched yourselves into the fabric of our lives as mentors, leaders, physicians, co-workers and friends.

Over the years, Rob and I have enjoyed the warm welcome and continued support extended by our McLeod family. Along with so many of you, we experienced the vibrant energy of a growing regional medical center that reflects the heart of this great community. Today, so many of you continue to embrace newcomers with a friendly, generous spirit -- benefiting our community as thousands of other top-tier medical families choose to remain at McLeod even though they are highly recruited by other hospitals. This longevity of relationships is rare in today’s transient society and has given McLeod stability and strength through the increasingly difficult challenges facing not-for-profit healthcare.

After some brief work with Pee Dee AHEC, I moved into a rewarding new role as Director of Marketing in 1982. So many of you helped with our efforts towards marketing research, communications, advertising, developing the McLeod Magazine -- helping us tell our McLeod stories along with introducing our physicians and their vital services to Florence and surrounding communities. Together, we worked to help position McLeod as a leader rising to the forefront of medical excellence. All the while continuing our commitment to offer care to all people in need regardless of their ability to pay for medical services. After 14 productive years, I “retired” to raise our three sons. For both Rob and me, it has been a treasure to grow personally and professionally, side-by-side with our McLeod friends throughout all stages of work, life and service. Along with you, our shared work has given us a sense of purpose and joy.

Many of you have also shared and encouraged us through our pain, resulting in a powerful and significant impact on our lives. Life is full of the unexpected. At times it completely broadsides us. In January 2014, I was diagnosed and treated for stage II breast cancer and then in the Fall of 2016, our McLeod doctors discovered that the cancer has metastasized to my bones, stage IV. Our excellent staff oncologists continue to research and assimilate personalized treatment plans in an effort to extend to me the richest life possible with metastasized breast cancer. It has been very reassuring when Rob and I visit with the nation’s foremost breast oncology specialists in Boston, to discover that they fully validate the treatment that our McLeod oncologists have planned.

While this very personal battle with cancer continues, I’m greatly blessed to regularly interact with so many of you: The profusion of encouraging cards, flowers, hugs and prayers have been abundantly uplifting. So many of you have had struggles yourselves and have lived out before those of us watching how to fight and where to find hope.

One powerful truth that I preach to myself daily states: “Fear is God-forgetting. There is a much better way ... It is God-remembering.” Even living with terminal disease, we are called to be hopeful -- to be conduits through which grace and generosity flow. We are also called to look outside ourselves. In the words of my favorite Tim McGraw song, “Always be humble and kind ... When you get where you’re going, turn back around and help the next one in line ... always be humble and kind.”

Along these lines, it is my privilege to serve on the HOPE (Helping Oncology Patients Everyday) Advisory Fund Committee. This group of leaders are not your usual “out in front” type of leaders. This HOPE Committee models true leadership by going back; because backwards giving is not the opposite of true leadership. True leadership turns back and extends hope: he who is rich beyond measure goes back for the poor ... he who is whole goes back for the broken ... he who is strength returns for the bruised. Funds are raised, much needed help is quietly and efficiently provided for so many McLeod cancer patients along with their families, and hope is restored.

Thank you for reading my story. For celebrating with me your generous gifts of service over these golden years together at McLeod. For allowing me a space where true hope can be unleashed -- “But as for me, the nearness of God is my good: I have made the Lord God my Refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.” -- Psalm 73:28