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Cancer Center

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Survivors and family members at our Manhattan event signed their names on a wall and wrote messages to staff and other patients.

Summary

Olympic gymnast Shannon Miller was diagnosed with germ cell ovarian cancer, a very rare disease, in 2011 and treated at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Learn more about her inspiring story.

"Celebrating survivorship is an important reminder of why MSK exists." —Memorial Sloan Kettering President and CEO Craig B. Thompson

Olympic Gold Medalist and Cancer Survivor Shannon Miller Addresses Memorial Sloan Kettering Celebration

Approximately 400 cancer survivors and their families and friends marked National Cancer Survivors Day at the fifth annual survivorship program and reception at Memorial Sloan Kettering in Manhattan on June 24. In his introductory speech, President and CEO [Craig B. Thompson](#) remarked that “the participation of everyone in this room, whether you’re a cancer survivor or family member or a member of the staff, has been inspirational in demonstrating what can be done.”

Though National Cancer Survivors Day is traditionally observed on the first Sunday in June, Memorial Sloan Kettering holds celebrations throughout the month for people who have survived cancer diagnosis and treatment, including at our outpatient facilities in Westchester and New Jersey and on Long Island.



Shannon Miller — Olympic gold medalist, ovarian cancer survivor, and mom — delivered the keynote speech at our Manhattan survivorship celebration.

Olympic Gold Medalist Shannon Miller’s Keynote Speech

The Manhattan program featured former Olympic gold medalist and cancer survivor Shannon Miller as the keynote speaker. Ms. Miller, who helped carry the US gymnastics team to the gold medal in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, was diagnosed with germ cell [ovarian cancer](#), a very rare disease, in 2011. She was treated successfully and soon after gave birth to her second child.

Ms. Miller recalled falling down in her first event while trying to qualify for the Olympic team but then rallying a bit later to perform one of the best routines of her life. “The saying in gymnastics was always, ‘You can’t fall and win.’ But what I learned from my career was that when you fall, you get back up,” she said.

She said she approached her cancer treatment as if she were preparing for a competition, relying on her training to get through the worst moments. “After my cancer diagnosis, I slowly began listening to those words that had guided me through so many pivotal moments in my life,” she said. “They became my rallying cry, my mantra. You fall down, you get back up.”



(From left) Cancer survivors and speakers Denise Bing, Shawn Tesser, and Shannon Miller with MSK President Craig Thompson and Mary McCabe, Director of our Cancer Survivorship Initiative, at our Manhattan celebration

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Words from Other Extraordinary Survivors

Three other cancer survivors also addressed the Manhattan gathering. Shawn Tesser, a television producer, spoke about her [breast cancer](#) diagnosis and her triumph in overcoming it with treatment from Memorial Sloan Kettering oncologist [Shanu Modi](#) and “the love of my family, close friends, and trusted relationships already established with my amazing team here.”



Gynecological surgeon Richard Barakat delivers his keynote address to attendees at our Long Island event.



MSK survivor Anita displays her survivorship milestone at our Long Island celebration.



MSK survivor Valia shares her survivorship milestone at our Long Island celebration.



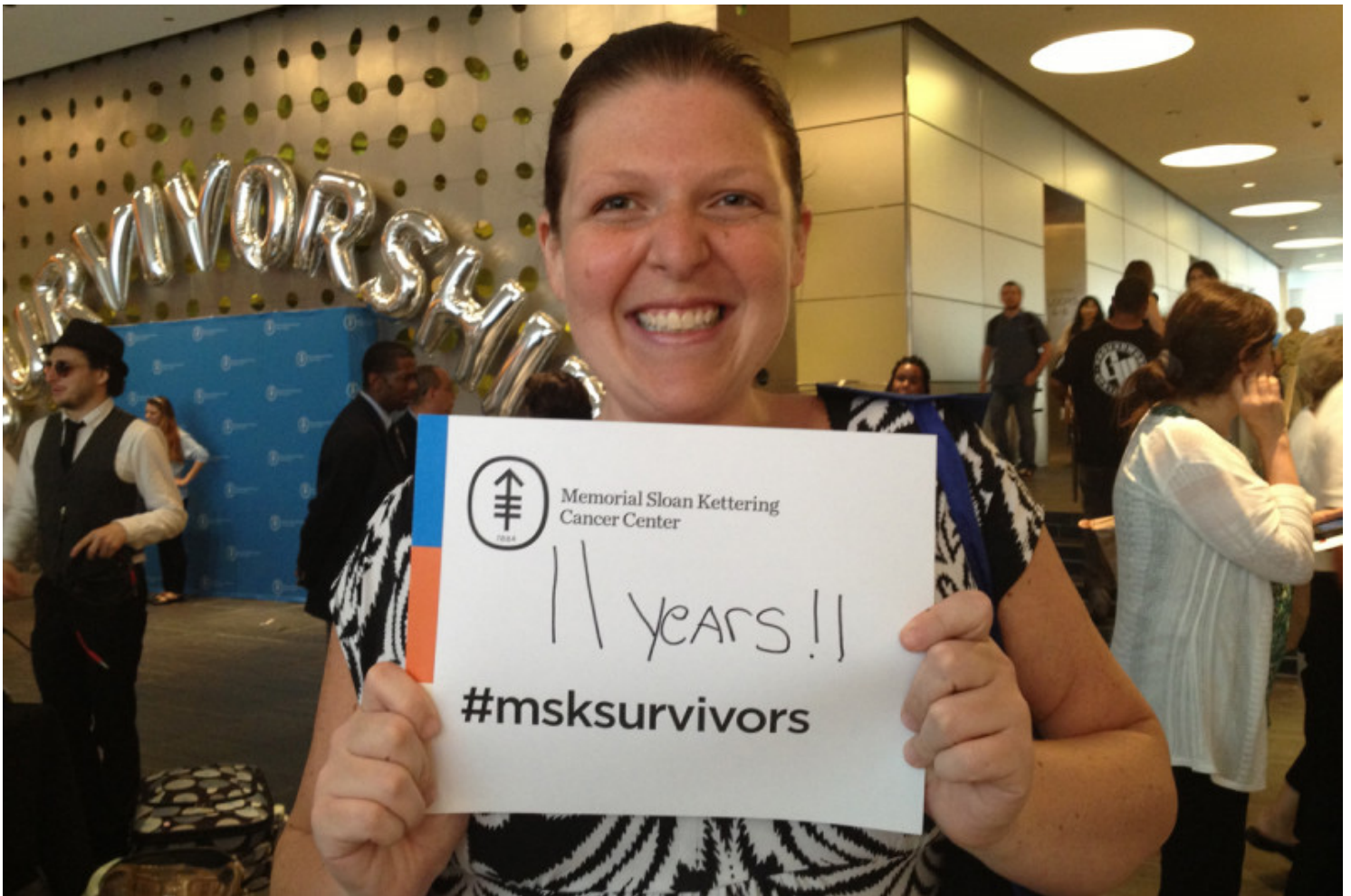
Patient speakers Cory Christensen (left) and Mary Elizabeth Williams strike a pose before our event in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.



Nick Medley, a cancer survivor and concierge at MSK's 53rd Street facility, greets a friend during a reception at our Manhattan event.



Master of ceremonies Philip Caron and keynote speaker Kelley Hebert pause for a photo at our celebration in Sleepy Hollow, New York.



Lauren Peyton, celebrating at our Manhattan event, was a pediatric cancer patient, an experience that made her want to become a nurse. She now works at Memorial Sloan Kettering as a breast cancer chemotherapy nurse.

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After her recovery, Ms. Tesser ran the New York City Marathon in 2011 while raising money for [Fred's Team](#) — only to learn just nine days later that her cancer had returned and had spread to her bones. “I remembered something my coach, Jeff Rochford, said during training,” she said. “The marathon really begins at mile 20, because those first 20 are so easy. I realized that it was mile 20 for me.”

Denise Bing, a research study assistant in Memorial Sloan Kettering's Department of Urology, recounted her battle with ovarian cancer after she was diagnosed in 2009. She said after being a caregiver for many others over the years, it was nice to have the help of family and friends as well as the chance to take advantage of the many support programs offered by Memorial Sloan Kettering. She now advocates for patients to use those same programs and to take care of themselves with a healthy lifestyle and frequent checkups.

Richard Park, a managing director in the investment banking division at Deutsche Bank, discussed his diagnosis with late-stage [thyroid cancer](#) in 2010. He said that after everything he had been through, what he cherished the most was the ability to say “I love you” to loved ones and friends. “If it wasn't for [surgical oncologist] [Jatin Shah](#) and the team at Memorial Sloan Kettering saving my vocal cords that day four years ago, I wouldn't have been able to utter those three words I say to my wife every night and every morning.”

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Another Step Forward

Memorial Sloan Kettering Physician-in-Chief José Baselga capped off the event by announcing the establishment of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Survivorship Center. The new center will continue establishing the standard of care for cancer survivors, building on the institution's leadership in

the field of cancer survivorship, which began with a hospital-wide initiative in 2003. The center will also conduct “practice-changing survivorship research” and develop a “preeminent center for training and education in survivorship,” Dr. Baselga said. “It’s incredibly exciting and is fantastic news for our community of survivors.”

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