

Aid for the 'silent sufferers'

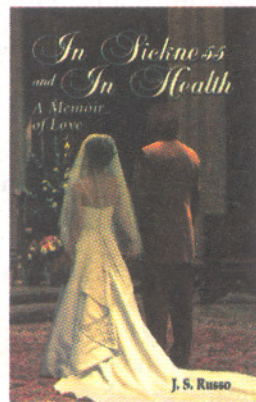
Teacher's foundation benefits children of cancer victims

By Liza Frenette
New York Teacher

Now that he's retired from teaching calculus, here's how Joseph Satriano does the math: He was married 29 years, his wife struggled with cancer for 13 years, and since her death five years ago he has awarded 33 Long Island students \$37,000 in college scholarships in her name.

All of the winning students have something in common — a parent who is either battling cancer or has died from it.

"It's obvious the cancer patient is suffering; the caregiver is suffering. It's very rare that you hear of



any foundation that helps the kids," said Satriano. He calls these children the "silent sufferers."

He and his wife, Susan, who had breast cancer,

raised sons Matthew and Justin.

"There's an emotional component that affects everyone. It's a domino effect," he said.

Students who have a parent in treatment for cancer often suffer falling grades from anxiety and worry; they often have to shoulder extra responsibilities at home: cleaning, cooking, watching siblings. There is usually a loss of income in the home.

A retired member of the Roslyn



Teachers Association, Satriano started the Susan Satriano Memorial Scholarship Foundation to "give these students a boost."

Satriano began the foundation with the proceeds from his wife's life insurance.

Each time a scholarship winner goes on to college, Susan's spirit goes with them, somewhere between the duffel bag and the dorm room.

Donations from individuals and small businesses keep the fund active, and his latest venture is boosting the coffers one book at a time.

Satriano spent three years writing *In Sickness and In Health: A Memoir of Love*, which he has now self-published under the pen name J. Russo.

"Four people at Sue's wake gave me journals and told me to start writing," he said. "A year after she died, I began."

The author said the book is not so much sad as it is about hope, optimism and a zest for living, beginning with the couple's innocent foray into dating after meeting in college as math majors.

He recalls the outdoor party for his wife's milestone birthday: "50 and in the Pink" with pink iced cake, pink lemonade and

pink champagne — all in the color of the breast cancer recovery movement.

"Do you know how hard it was for me, Matt and Justin to find pink tuxedos? But we did!" he said.

On their anniversary they rented a paddle-wheel boat and had a DJ and dancing, along with a candle-lighting ceremony for friends, family and colleagues.

Satriano chronicles specific types of medical treatment given to his wife and examines the choices they made along that path.

He also reveals with candor the beautifully imperfect way they dealt with the steady rain of fluctuating emotions from being vulnerable to life.

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■ To purchase a signed copy of Satriano's inspirational book, write to joe@susansatrianofoundation.com.

Proceeds from book sales go to the foundation, www.SusanSatrianoFoundation.com.