

NYS Budget Hearings

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Mitch Flynn for Roswell Park Cancer Institute

My name is Mitch Flynn. I'm a business owner in Buffalo and have been a volunteer at Roswell Park Cancer Institute since 1991.

Buffalo has a history of public and community partnership that dates back to the building of the Erie Canal in 1825. New York State joined forces with private citizens to make Buffalo the western terminus of the canal. Roswell Park follows in the same tradition of private/public collaboration.

When I first saw Roswell in the early 1990s, it physically matched the description I had often heard as a place "where people go to die." The physical plant was dismal. Today, thanks to a combination of community and state support, Roswell now features a landmark 8-story building, state-of-the-art laboratories and facilities, and a campus that is both inspiring and healing for all who visit there.

Key to this development was Roswell's transition in 1999 from a New York State-run facility to a public benefit corporation. New York State owns the land and buildings; all revenues are considered New York State assets per legislation; and board members are appointed by elected officials. So the ties between the state and the Institute are multi-layered and deep.

But the transformation of Roswell's physical plant is just part of the story. The Institute sees more than 20,000 patients annually; is the 18th largest employer in Western New York, with more than 2,900 on its payroll; and has spun off or attracted an impressive number of new companies to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, of which it is a founding member.

My connection to Roswell has been through a fundraising bike-a-thon called The Ride For Roswell, which I founded in 1996, following the death of my father-in-law, Jack Goldstein.

Since its inception, The Ride has raised more than \$6.4 million for the Institute. Between 2003 and 2007, the gross proceeds of the Ride have increased from \$300,000 to \$510,000 to \$870,000 to \$1.2 million to \$1.7 million. More than 4,500 riders and 800 volunteers participated in last year's event.

What I believe The Ride demonstrates is the incredible community support Roswell enjoys in the community. The community support is there. All we need to ensure that Roswell will maintain its national and worldwide leadership as a center of cancer research, treatment, care and education is the continued support and partnership of New York State.

Thank you.