

CANCER COPING CENTER

DR. MARYAM DAVODI-FAR

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FOR PATIENTS WITH CANCER, the disease can be all-consuming. But thanks to a group of volunteers, thousands of patients in San Diego County have gotten an opportunity to take their minds off their illness. The Cancer Coping Center's mission says it all: "To enhance and improve the quality of life for cancer patients, family members and caregivers through creativity."

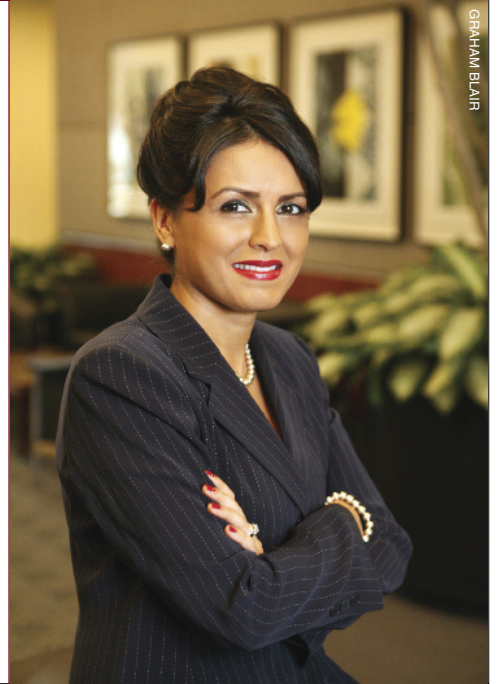
"We offer a diversion for patients by encouraging them creatively to express themselves without placing any expectations on them; we never judge the end product, but rather focus on the process," says founder Dr. Maryam Davodi-Far. "Even if it is for an hour, they are given the chance to forget the IV in their arm and play, explore and laugh. We provide an escape for them, and there's never any cost."

Dr. Davodi-Far became interested in pro-

viding art as an outlet for patients after her mother-in-law was diagnosed with cancer more than 10 years ago. She noticed that the lives of patients with cancer are frequently defined by structure—medical appointments, paperwork and endless updates for loved ones. As a result, "Sometimes they just don't want to talk about their condition," she says. "They don't want their ill health to be the focal point of their lives. They want to concentrate on something else."

That's where the Cancer Coping Center comes in. With generous donations and countless hours of volunteer support, the center's facilitators reach out to those in need, whether they're adults or children.

"We give people the tools for inspiration and motivate them to find ways to challenge their minds and restore their spirit," says Dr. Davodi-Far.



GRAHAM BLAIR