

JASON GOODMAN/Special to the Home news Tribune

George Yuhasz, a resident of the Colonia section of Woodbridge, is founder and president of Prodigal Foundation, a non-profit organization. The foundation's first endeavor is offering scholarship to Middlesex County high school seniors whose lives have been affected by cancer. **SEE STORY, PAGE D7**

Cancer spurs man to aid other patients, disabled

By **SUSAN LOYER**
STAFF WRITER

WOODBIDGE: George Yuhasz's life changed dramatically in 1999.

Diagnosed with a massive carcinoma on the pancreas and told he had less than one month to live, the Colonia resident was devastated.

"It was the worst experience of my life," he said. "I couldn't believe it."

Yet, the special-education teacher at Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High School's East Brunswick campus wasn't about to give up.

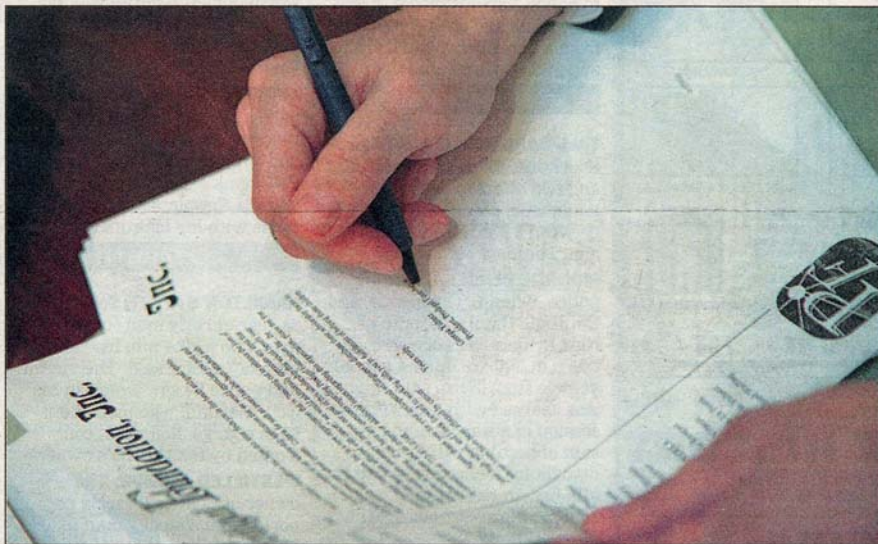
"I traveled around from hospital to hospital hoping for a miracle," he said. "I finally got one."

In January of 2000, Yuhasz checked into John Hopkins University Hospital, where Dr. Kurtis Campbell removed the mass.

"It was found to be noncancerous," he said. "I was given a clean bill of health."

During his treatment, Yuhasz had the opportunity to meet other cancer patients, and as he recovered from his surgery, he wanted to do something to help others struggling with cancer.

"Through it all, I met a lot of wonderful people," said Yuhasz, who received his master's degree in special-education administration from Columbia University in New York. "Many of them were having such a neg-



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George Yuhasz, the founder of the Prodigal Foundation, prepares to sign a letter begging sent to Middlesex County high school seniors offering scholarships to those whose lives have been affected by cancer.

ative experience with cancer. I wanted to help them. I wanted to give something back."

So, Yuhasz, with the help of friends and professionals who supported him through his ordeal, formed Prodigal Foundation, a nonprofit organization.

"Prodigal Foundation will be reaching out to individuals with disabilities and establish goals that will enhance their

quality of life," Yuhasz, who serves as the foundation's president, said.

"A strong emphasis will be placed on children afflicted with cancer," added Dawn Lystad, vice-president of the foundation. "Our goals are to hopefully contribute in some way to make their lives and (those) of their families more comfortable throughout this difficult period."

Yuhasz has been working with officials at Raritan Bay Medical Center, with divisions in Perth Amboy and Old Bridge, and John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Edison discussing

each hospital's special needs to help children that are patients at either facility.

"We want to reach out effectively to children with cancer," he said. "Our goal is to improve their quality of life in some way, shape or matter."

He said the group distributed about 100 stuffed bears to children in area hospitals in December.

To increase public awareness, he said, the group will sponsor a float in the March 11 St. Patrick's Day Parade in Woodbridge.

Prodigal Foundation also is offering 15 scholarships to Middlesex County high-school seniors whose lives have been adversely affected by cancer.

The \$250 scholarships can be used for college, trade school or professional school, Yuhasz said. The deadline for applying is April 30.

To obtain a scholarship application or for additional information on the foundation, write to Prodigal Foundation Inc., P.O. Box 181, Colonia, N.J., 07067. For more information, call (732) 815-0348 or fax (732) 381-5045. A Web site will also be created in the near future.

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