

# HLL HAUTE LIVING

## On My Desk: Lavinia Branca Snyder, President of The Society of Memorial Sloan Kettering

by Catherine Sabino, May 12, 2016



Lavinia Branca Snyder, president of The Society of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

As president of The Society of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, **Lavinia Branca Snyder** heads up one of the city's most important charity groups. Often populated by prominent Manhattan social figures, the Society raises funds for MSK cancer research and patient care. This

year on May 17th, SMSKCC celebrates a milestone 70th birthday at its annual gala, the Spring Ball, to be held at the Plaza.

In addition to her work with The Society, where she has chaired a number of its committees, Ms. Branca Snyder has been involved with numerous philanthropic organizations, serving as board member for the Southampton Fresh Air Home, the Women's Refugee Commission, and as a trustee for the Brian and Lavinia Snyder Foundation. She has also been a financial executive (and was co-founder and partner of The Baltheus Group, a merchant bank based in New York); author of children's books distributed in three languages; and arts patron, who launched the JAR Project Space, a contemporary art gallery and installation space in New York City. She was born in Rome and is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence.

**Describe what's on your desk right now.**

An intricate overlay of color-coded pages, project reports, and invitations in process. A book on the history of The Society of MSK for inspiration and guidance. An invitation to our upcoming 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Spring Ball on May 17<sup>th</sup>. A draft of a research report looking back at the 70 years of projects supporting research, education and the patients at Memorial Sloan Kettering. There are also some personal items, like my two small grass bunnies to celebrate nature, my Buddha to remember that what matters is others, and my mini wireless speaker to remind me to sing.

**What's the most cherished possession?**

The box of Baci Perugina chocolates that I sometimes get at the gift shop. When the days are rainy or the moment beckons, with one bite it feels like my home in Rome is just a moment away.

**What can't you live without?**

My blue calendar book. Despite being quite tech-oriented, I like to see my thoughts, my to-do's, and my life plans laid out with ink on paper, page after slightly worn page, White-out and all.

**Anything with special memories or significance?**

My office houses our conference room in which I am lucky to be surrounded by photos of The Society's many past presidents and board members. The photos remind me every day that we are each entrusted with carrying forward a tradition and a legacy that is as unique as it is remarkable. Their images enshrine the best that The Society can be.

**Do you have a favorite photo?**

The photo I like the most is one taken at the hospital about 50 years ago. It pictures two young pediatric patients in a playroom decorated with bunnies and bows. One of our board members can be seen in a big white bunny costume smiling and playing. The photo is unframed and the cardboard edges are slightly dented, but it glows with the spirit and the meaning of what The Society does.

**Describe the tech items you have and why you chose them.**

I have an iPad to read (and to see my daughter's face on the home-screen wallpaper), iPhone to communicate, and a hospital assigned desktop PC that reminds me that I am part of a vast family of medical professionals and scientists with whom I share the goal to help find a cure for cancer—and care for our patients.

**What's your work day like? When do you start, finish?**

I start when I wake up. I check my iPad and answer any pressing emails. The team I work with is always ready and our timetables are pretty tight. So doing my part quickly is important to the overall run-of-show for The Society's countless programs and events. I finish when I go to sleep.

**How do you balance evening appearances with your work day?**

I look at every day differently. Some days my work weaves seamlessly into an evening event and I dress accordingly. I often choose darker or bolder colors paired with slightly more prominent accessories and heels. Some days I come in dressed in my go-to: an Oxford shirt and black trousers. I always have a blazer, high heel pumps, and pair of glamour earrings in my desk drawer at the office so I can quickly rev-up the look in case I need to go to an unscheduled meeting.

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