

You'll feel better inside.

FALL 2016

# Wellness News


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## Finding Common Experience After a Rare Diagnosis

*Pictured: Janet Medhat*

In medical schools, students learn the philosophy: *“When you hear hoof beats, think horses, not zebras.”* In other words, physicians are taught to focus on the most likely of possibilities, not the unusual ones.

But sometimes, what looks like a common condition with typical symptoms can be masking a more serious disease. In the case of Neuroendocrine Carcinoid Cancer, physicians need to look for a zebra!

Five years ago, Janet Medhat certainly didn't feel “unusual” among her friends and neighbors in Downers Grove. Her daughter had been married the year before, and Janet and her husband were happily looking forward to the arrival of their first grandchild in the fall. She could see a bright future ahead for her family.

Her Neuroendocrine Carcinoid Cancer diagnosis in

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**PRESIDENT AND CEO, JEANNIE CELLA**  
**BOARD CHAIR, JOHN PARO**



## The Kay and Mike Birck Home of Hope

**A**t this time of year when summer turns into fall, we put away our bathing suits, lawn mowers and sun screen and get out the footballs, school books and schedules, closing one door and opening another. Halloween costumes are already in stores and it won't be long before the holidays are upon us and our homes welcome family and friends to gather and celebrate life. There will be a lot of "coming home" during this season.

Every day, at Wellness House, people cross our threshold and experience a sense of "coming home" as they report finding warmth, encouragement, familiarity with others affected by cancer and, most importantly, the realization that they are not alone. While the challenges are unique to each individual, what binds them together is the shared hope that what they will find inside our doors will have a positive impact on their health and well-being.

On July 21, 2016, we held a dedication ceremony naming our building the Kay and Mike Birck Home of Hope. The Bircks made their first donation to Wellness House even before we opened our doors more than 26 years ago and have consistently and generously supported our programs ever since. With their transformational \$3 million gift to the 25th anniversary campaign, Mike and Kay led the way for others to follow. The Tellabs Foundation honored Mike and Kay with a \$1 million gift and many more additional donors joined the \$10.65 million campaign as well. Today, we are happy to report that we are 87% to our goal.

The meaning of hope translates in countless ways and with generous donations like those from the Birck family, we're able to sustain our current home in Hinsdale and expand our mission throughout the Chicagoland area by serving more cancer patients and their families inside the doors of their own communities. This is an exciting year at Wellness House as we meet the growing need of those living with cancer and respond with programs to help them live their best lives emotionally and physically. The experienced staff at Wellness House welcomes our mothers, brothers, next door neighbors and friends at that intersection where hope meets heart, the front door of "The Kay and Mike Birck Home of Hope."

**Jeannie Cella, MS, LCPC**  
President and CEO

**John Paro**  
Board Chair

Selling  
Out Fast



## WINE HARVEST BALL

**Saturday, October 15, 2016**  
Revel Fulton Market

*Tiffany and Kevin Knaul, Chairs*  
Visit [wellnesshouse.org](http://wellnesshouse.org) to register

## When Breath Becomes Air

### Presentation & Book Signing



**Dr. Lucy Kalanithi** will discuss her late husband **Paul Kalanithi's** moving and profound memoir, *When Breath Becomes Air*

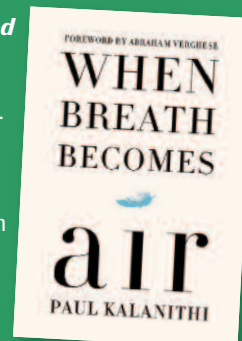
**Thursday, September 22,**  
**7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

**Admission Free –  
Registration Required**

Wellness House,  
131 N. County Line Rd.  
Hinsdale, IL

For more information  
visit [wellnesshouse.com](http://wellnesshouse.com)  
or call 630.323.5150

*This event is presented  
for those affected  
by cancer*



# Finding Common Experience *cover story continued*

*Continued from page 1*

October 2011 challenged her outlook.

Neuroendocrine Carcinoid Cancer affects 5 in every 100,000 people. This rare cancer is often misdiagnosed for years as Crohn's Disease or Irritable Bowel Disease. The delay in diagnosis contributes to tumor metastasis that is irreversible. In Janet's case, the primary tumor in her small intestine has metastasized throughout her liver.

## **Wellness House**

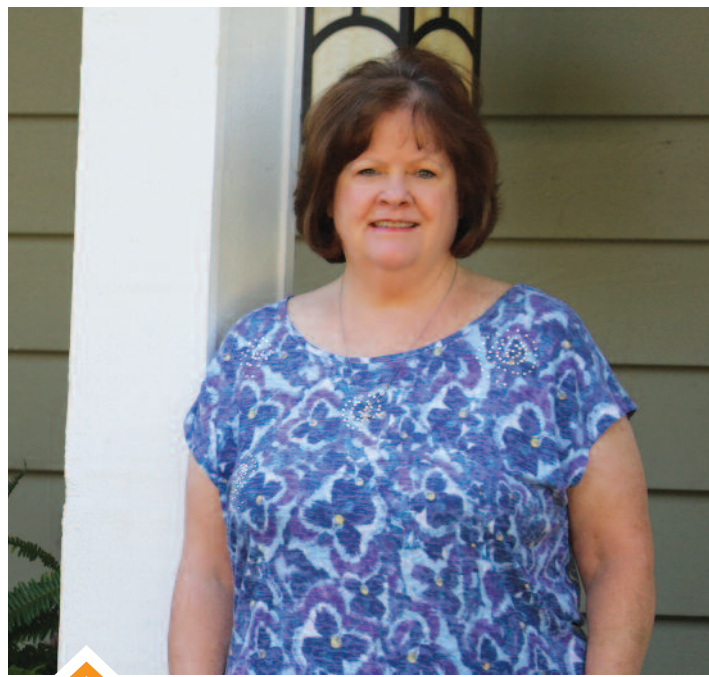
Janet's original oncologist candidly admitted that she was not experienced with the management or treatment of Neuroendocrine Carcinoid Cancer. She recommended a university setting where Janet could benefit from an experienced oncologist and interventional radiologist, the latest research, and perhaps a clinical trial.

It was the oncologist Janet connected with from the University of Chicago who suggested Wellness House's Carcinoid Support group. Despite the Medhats' proximity to our Hinsdale location, Janet had never heard of Wellness House. And while she was glad to hear such a place existed, she didn't really think she needed it. She had a large family and friend network of support, and was wary of participating in a support group.

"After that initial oncologist visit, I continued researching on my own," says Janet. "I had more questions than answers and my well-intentioned family and friends just didn't have that information. I needed to talk to someone who 'walked the walk!' Once I decided to call Wellness House, I jumped in with both feet. I have been attending monthly meetings ever since."

The Carcinoid Networking Group at Wellness House, facilitated by a counseling psychologist, helps participants benefit from others' experience. They hear from their fellow participants about side effects, clinical trials, specialists and recommended hospitals, insurance coverage issues, carcinoid nutrition, and more. "Even those who have passed on continue to benefit the group," says Janet. "We share what we learned from their experiences with new members, as needed."

Members come from all over the Chicagoland area and beyond. Janet points out, "There is no support group in Wisconsin. One lady drove here from Madison and stayed overnight in a hotel to attend our meeting. One couple would come every three to six months from New York. They were in town to follow up with their doctor and always tried to schedule the appointments around our meeting time."



**Pictured:** Janet Medhat

Janet retired last year and has been using the Wellness House fitness center and participating in workout classes. "I attend from 2 to 4 days a week – a little less in the spring and summer since I add outdoor bike riding," she told us proudly. "I do the Wellness One Class and have also done Yoga, Tai Chi, and Hypnosis. I like meeting people with other cancers, too. I learn from them and their stories. And my family and I have attended many special events, including having a team at the Wellness House Walk."

This past June, Janet took the time to speak to the Wellness House board of directors about her experiences at Wellness House. She thanked them and the staff for their dedicated work. She knows first-hand the benefits of our support and resources. And Wellness House has brought her close to new friends who are on this cancer journey with her and her family.

When Janet first heard about her Neuroendocrine Carcinoid Cancer, her oncologist explained that only 50% of people with Janet's amount of tumor burden are still alive in five years. Since that diagnosis, Janet's daughter had her baby, her son married, and a second grandchild is on the way. Clearly, there's much to motivate and excite her. "I will reach the five-year mark this October. Last I looked, I do not have an expiration date stamped on the bottom of my foot, so I intend to keep on keeping on for many years to come!"



## Silver Anniversary of Nonprofit Consignment Shop Finds the Original Founders Still Thrilled With The Hunt

The year was 1991. Three Hinsdale residents – sisters Nancy Keenan and Sheila Botti and their friend, Kathy Ryan – shared a mutual passion for antiquing, finding treasures at area auctions, and scouring flea markets and house sales. They also had a common interest in home decorating and interior design. They dreamed of one day opening a resale shop or antique store.

Enter Nancy's friend, Suzy Stout. Nancy remembers well the day when she and Suzy were sitting on her front stoop talking about the new Wellness House that was coming to Hinsdale. Wellness

House was founded as a nonprofit support center for cancer survivors and their families, and was in need of financial support to get their programs off the ground. Both Nancy and Suzy were breast cancer survivors and they saw this as an opportunity to be a part of a worthwhile cause and to use their personal skills, passions, and interests to help.

A meeting was held, and other members of the community were pulled in to formulate a business plan for a resale/consignment shop. The innovative plan for The Courtyard was then presented to the Wellness House board of directors.

"The very idea of consignment shops was new in '91," says Kathy.

"Diane Halbrook was dynamite in formulating a plan; she had experience in working with nonprofits," says Nancy. "Bill Walker was the new head of Wellness House, and he believed in us, he was one of our early cheerleaders."



*(Left to right) Kathy Ryan, Sheila Botti and Nancy Keenan, founders and merchandisers of The Courtyard in Hinsdale, meet with Bill Walker, Executive Director of Wellness House in Hinsdale in 1991. The Courtyard, an upscale resale and consignment shop, opened its doors for the first time that year to benefit Wellness House, a center for people and their families that are living with cancer.*

Wellness House offered The Courtyard volunteers some seed money to get them started.

"We were proud that we were profitable from the first day we opened, and we never needed the seed money," says Sheila.

Others that were instrumental at the start included Hinsdale community leaders Alice Mansell, Betty Brinker and Halbrook's mother, Leila Ronning. "Genie Nowak was with us from the beginning, as well" says Sheila. "She had knowledge and interest in antiques and helped to price items for sale."

"Our husbands and families were very supportive," Nancy

says. "At the beginning, we were spending up to 8 to 12 hours a day working on The Courtyard's operation."

Today finds The Courtyard with a dedicated group of more than 70 volunteers and only two paid staff positions. "We have record-breaking continuity with our volunteer staff," Kathy proudly states. Many, like Genie, were there at the launch and are the foundation on which The Courtyard still depends today.

"That special feeling that comes with being a part of something meaningful keeps them coming back year after year," says Sheila. "We are a community that has brought many people together, and many wonderful friendships have evolved."

Volunteers have watched each other's families grow, children get married, and grandchildren arrive. Nancy, Sheila and Kathy alone have 17 children among them, and 38 grandchildren! Nancy's family is excitedly awaiting the birth of the first great-grandchild of the three founders!



*(Left to right)  
Kathy Ryan,  
Nancy Keenan  
and Sheila Botti,  
current  
merchandisers  
and original  
founders at  
The Courtyard  
in Hinsdale.*

**The Courtyard is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday.**

For more information, call Marna Slawson, Manager, or Melinda Larson, Assistant Manager, at (630) 323-1135 or Cindy Higgins, marketing volunteer, at 630-267-8092.

## Sourcing Great Merchandise

Today resale, repurpose, reuse, and rework are popular buzzwords. Pinterest, home network television stations, and other internet sites offer a staggering volume of ideas and suggestions for making the old new again.

But there were no internet sites, cell phones, or GPS in The Courtyard's early years. The three women would make appointments to go into homes, hitting as many as 8 or 9 in a day, to view items for consideration to sell in the shop. With no phones to call for directions if they were lost, they had a few adventures along the way! They were also known to "brake for garage sales," flea markets, or other consignment shops on family vacations and even, to the chagrin of their children, on a few college visits! "We had big cars then," laughs Sheila.

Sheila and Kathy had children that attended Boston College and Villanova. On parent weekend visits, they would sometimes drive a truck together so that they could stop and shop on their way to the East Coast. All three enjoyed travel to Europe. The distance didn't discourage them from shopping; they just shipped any fabulous finds back in crates. Word was spreading among area residents, and consignors were bringing in their own furnishings and household items for sale. "As the shop began to fill, it took on a life of its own," says Kathy.

The shop has always been closed on Mondays to receive new consignments. People used to line up outside the door on Tuesday mornings to have the first look. But buyers today can check out items for sale on The Courtyard's website ([shopthecourtyard.com](http://shopthecourtyard.com)). New postings are put up every Tuesday by the two staff members, who also take advantage of other popular social media sites.

"The internet has expanded our horizons; people can discover what's here, and they can send us pictures of items to sell," says Kathy. "The smart phone has changed our business."

All three women agree that staying with the trends is crucial. What was "in" or popular five years ago may not necessarily sell well today. Being selective on what is consigned has helped The Courtyard maintain its reputation for high-end, quality furnishings, home accessories, lighting, artwork and jewelry.

## Looking to the Future

The Courtyard has been housed in basically the same location in the Village of Hinsdale from the start, but it was really able to put down

roots at 63 Village Place when Hinsdale Bank & Trust built their present building and provided dedicated space behind their offices just for The Courtyard. The bank continues to be a big support in many ways. "At this point, we do not want to expand and sacrifice quality in order to fill shop," Kathy says. "The next group will come along and may do it differently, but we feel like The Courtyard will always do well," Sheila adds.

For now, the three women show no signs of slowing down. The thrill of the hunt continues to be a driving force for them. They may no longer need to go out to the markets, but they have a few big flea markets in other states that are on their bucket lists. They still look forward to Mondays together at the shop.

To date, The Courtyard has donated an impressive \$4 million-plus to Wellness House. Weathering the frantic times has empowered them and taught them that if you work hard, you can make great things happen. "The Courtyard has been a huge part of our lives," says Nancy. "It's made our lives so interesting."

*Holiday Gifts at...*

**The  
Courtyard**   
You'll treasure the experience.

**A donation/consignment shop of quality home furnishings to benefit Wellness House.**

- Never the same store twice
- New arrivals weekly
- One-of-a-kind items
- Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**For more information:** Call 630.323.1135 or visit [ShopTheCourtyard.com](http://ShopTheCourtyard.com)  
The Courtyard | 63 Village Place | Hinsdale, IL 60521

It's through programs such as *Family Matters* and our other program areas of *Information and Education*, *Stress Management*, *Support & Networking*, and *Healthy Living* that people experience improved quality of life.

# kids *being* kids



For a week every summer, the usually-serene atmosphere of Wellness House is sweetly punctuated by the sounds of children laughing and playing together. That's how you know it's Kids Kamp time again. This year, from July 11 to 15, close to 40 kids ran around our backyard, prepared snacks in the kitchen, watched a magic show, petted a pig in the Family Room, and turned the Wellness House Board Room into a craft space for three hours every day.

Kids Kamp is one of Wellness House's multiple *Family Matters* offerings throughout the year. These programs are designed to provide a safe, supportive space for all members of the family. Many kids are introduced to Wellness House at a time when their family is trying to process some very bad news. Through discussion, play, and expressive arts, they learn coping skills and, surrounded by others going through similar experiences, regain a sense of normalcy. They see that it's okay to feel sad – but it's also okay to feel happy on the outside even when they're afraid on the inside.

Wellness House's Chelsea Yoo, MS, CCLS, Oncology Child Life Specialist, and Kids Kamp Director, sees the camp as an opportunity to give kids affected by cancer in their families, or living with cancer themselves, a week of pure fun. "The goal with Kids Kamp is to let kids be kids first. There is no part of the agenda that forces discussion of cancer, although our staff is always willing to listen if the topic comes up. Kids know that everyone around them is going through something similar, and they may ask each other questions, as kids often do. But the main objective of the week is for them to have fun."

Chelsea also knows that parents need to feel comfortable about what their kids are up to during a sensitive and challenging period

for their families. Parental emotions can greatly affect children, and Kids Kamp is meant to be a respite from the anxiety. "Parents benefit from knowing about the activities, knowing that they are welcome to observe and stay in the building, and knowing that their kids are in good hands. The kids enjoy themselves here, so parents can drop them off and pick them up afterwards without worry."

It's easy to recognize the fun kids are having at Kids Kamp. Attendee numbers have been growing every year, and at least 15 of this year's campers were "returnees." In fact, for one of the volunteer counselors, Kids Kamp has been a part of life for over a decade.

## **From Kid to Counselor: A Lifetime Relationship with Wellness House**

Meagan Mitchell first started coming to Wellness House with her family twelve years ago, when she was 5 years old. Her mother had just been diagnosed with an aggressive form of inflammatory breast cancer. For Meagan, programs like the Kids Group and Turtles, Wellness House's support group and bereavement support group for children, helped her understand and cope with her situation – and not feel alone.

"When I lost my mother [in April of 2005], nothing changed for

*Kids Being Kids continued on page 7*

*Kids Being Kids continued from page 6*

me at Wellness House,” Meagan says. “I could still come here and everyone would always be there for me. I remember all the other activities here, but my favorite was always Kids Kamp. The volunteers there would always help me. And I wanted to be able to do that for the kids who are there today. I really saw myself in them. So I felt like I knew what I could say to them, what I should say to them. And how to help them like the volunteers when I was younger helped me.”

After all these years, Meagan knows what it means to have Kids Kamp counselors who understand the campers’ experience. “The difference between school friends and the friends you make through Wellness House is a recognition that we can’t escape what we’re dealing with, but we can be shown that we’re not alone,” says Meagan. “Other friends don’t necessarily know what this feel like.”

Meagan also recognizes how giving back to Wellness House as a counselor contributes to her ongoing healing. “I think it would be interesting to be a counselor at other camps, too, but with Kids Kamp, there was no learning curve. And it feels good to make a difference.”

When Kids Kamp week is over, Wellness House maintains its calm, soothing, therapeutic atmosphere – albeit with a bit less noise. But the smiles and laughter of Kids Kamp make a long-lasting imprint on the building and its participants. Meagan has a unique perspective on the experience. “One of the fun things about being a Kids Kamp counselor now is that, even though there’s a little more technology introduced during the week, they



*From left to right  
Hana Lewis  
Matthew Lewis  
Meagan Mitchell  
Madalyn Johnston*

still do a lot of the same things that I did when I was a kid, like the live animal presentation. It brings back great memories.”

Chelsea agrees that traditional camp activities are the centerpiece of the program. “Scavenger hunts, games, arts and crafts – these still play a big role in Kids Kamp. Last year, Apple came in and helped the kids make movies on iPads, which was cool. But for the most part, it’s pretty low-tech. Our goal is to keep the kids active and engaged for those three hours every day. We’ve learned to keep the scheduled packed – kids are happier when there’s little downtime in the Kamp schedule. And letting kids feel happy and secure is what Kids Kamp is all about.”



## We All Walk Together

A little rain and brisk weather didn’t hold back the enthusiasm and determination of participants at our annual Walk for Wellness that took place last spring. This year we had over 2,250 people register and raised over \$500,000 with the help of corporate donations and over 150 volunteers. It’s a family and friend event with many people participating year after year to make it a tradition to support a loved one and Wellness House. Pat Duerinck of Glen Ellyn finished the walk with her daughter Linn Dressel of Carol



Stream in honor of Duerinck’s daughter in law. “People feel empowered when they can take action. They feel like they are doing something to help” Duerinck said. Martha

Hoekstra and Linda Vander Naald of Riverside also crossed the finish line together. It was the fifth year the sisters had participated in the walk. This walk marks five years cancer-free for Martha Hoekstra who participates in the many programs at Wellness House such as exercise and nutrition.

This meaningful annual event creates a place for community to come together while helping to support our growing mission to assist those affected by cancer. One of the most memorable moments of the day happens during our release of biodegradable balloons and includes a message carefully prepared and written by participants and their loved ones. A huge thank you to our presenting sponsor McDonald’s Corporation and all who attended and supported this event. We couldn’t do it without you! We’re already in the planning stages for the next Walk for Wellness so mark your calendars for May 7th, 2017!

## LOOKING FOR WAYS TO HELP?

At Wellness House our volunteers are at the heart of what we do. On any given day you'll find a community of volunteers with diverse talents helping us welcome and assist people living with cancer. Many of our volunteers tell us they get as much as they give and that's a win for all of us. If you have a desire to volunteer, there's a place for you at Wellness House. We're looking for the following volunteers on an ongoing basis! There are many other ways in addition to the following but here are just a few.

**For information contact Caly Meyers at [volunteers@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:volunteers@wellnesshouse.org) or call (630)654-5109.**

### **Our Front Desk**

Making our participants feel welcome is part of our philosophy. We are looking for people to greet visitors and help create a warm environment by answering phones and checking people into busy programs.

### **Healthy Living and Stress Management Facilitators**

Help us empower and support Wellness House participants. We're looking for professional Massage Therapists, Reiki or Energy Touch Healers, or Yoga or Tai Chi instructors.

### **The Courtyard**

The Courtyard is our local consignment/retail store that sells a variety of fine furnishings. All proceeds benefit Wellness House. From helping customers to setting up eye-catching displays, we would benefit from any retail or computer support.

### **OTHER WAYS TO HELP**

If you're looking for a way to help but don't have the time, we are always looking for in-kind donations for our programs. Below are a few items we are currently seeking for our Family Matters program:

- Bottled water
- Individual packs of snacks
- Pizza (or gift cards for pizza)
- Tickets to events or places for groups of teens/families (examples include sports, bowling, restaurants, indoor sky diving, trampoline parks)
- Pumpkins for our Spooky Spectacular event on 10/26



## Hot Topics in Prostate Cancer 2016 Symposium

Saturday, September 24, 2016  
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

### **Admission Free - Registration Required**

*This event is presented for those affected by cancer*  
Wellness House, 131 N. County Line Rd, Hinsdale, IL