

Support Groups
and Counseling

Finding Your Tribe

Lauren Hoffman

Wellness News

Lisa Kolavennu Unanimously Selected as Executive Director, effective July 1



After an extensive search for the next executive director of Wellness House, the transition committee, comprised of members of the Board of Directors and Wellness House staff, selected Sr. Director of Programs, **Lisa Kolavennu**, for this important role. Ninety-five candidates applied, eighteen

phone interviews and five in-person interviews were conducted. For the remainder of 2019, Jeannie will transition her responsibilities to Lisa who will officially take over leadership of Wellness House January 1, 2020.

Inspired by Wellness House's mission to help individuals with cancer feel better inside utilizing a whole person approach, Lisa left a job she enjoyed at The Children's Place Association where she had been a Department Manager and Clinical Therapist for 7 years, working with children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. Lisa, a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, began her work at Wellness House in 2007 as Director of Program Evaluation and Strategic Initiatives. After demonstrating her understanding of the needs of cancer patients, her ability to conceptualize and deliver psychosocial interventions for this population, and her knowledge of assessment and understanding of program impact, Lisa was promoted to Program Director in 2008.

For the past 12 years, Lisa has directed and supervised a multidisciplinary staff and currently oversees the delivery of 450+ programs per month, with growth in annual participation by 118%, now serving more than 3,500 individuals annually, earning her the title of Senior Director of Programs in 2016. "Wellness House has a strong history of leadership, community support and mission driven impact. I am incredibly honored to be selected as the next Executive Director of this organization and look forward to all the ways we will continue to support individuals who are experiencing cancer," said Lisa Kolavennu, Executive Director, Wellness House.

You will experience Lisa as a highly competent, compassionate, strong leader, ready to take the mantle on January 1, 2020 to lead Wellness House into the future. And... you will "feel better inside" knowing she will be at the helm.

Dear Friends,

Winding down my time at Wellness House, I'm aware that my greatest wish is that you know I am deeply grateful for YOU. You are reading this newsletter because you have touched Wellness House in some way, and you need to know...every way matters. After almost 30 years at Wellness House, I can tell you my life has changed in profound, often surprising, sometimes spiritual, always life affirming ways. As I look in the rear-view mirror, a thread that is woven through the history of my work at Wellness House is an abiding sense of joy...yes, JOY! And, it has been a gift bestowed upon me through the relationships that I've made over the years.

One of my early memories of this felt experience of joy was while I was an intern, in 1990, interviewing new participants. One of the questions we typically asked was, "What do you love...what brings you joy?" In response, Kathy, a young woman diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer, slowly closed her eyes, took in a deep breath, like she was relishing the moment, and simply said, "Oh... the smell of little boys after they've been outside playing." My son, Michael, was 6 years old at the time, and from that day forward, the lens through which I experienced the "little boy-ness" of my own little boy took on new meaning.

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting Lauren Hoffman, the beautiful, young, vibrant woman on the cover of this newsletter. Listening to her story and her experience of Wellness House, the same soul-stirring feeling I had when talking with Kathy almost 30 years ago emerged. Lauren exudes joy...it's contagious when you're with her! As you read about her cancer story, you realize that her path is not without challenge. And yet, with a sparkle in her eye and a grin from ear to ear, she speaks of finding her "tribe" at Wellness House and credits us for helping her reconnect with her strength and resiliency.

For me, it's so fitting that the theme of our ball this year is "Joie de Vivre...finding joy while living with cancer." Kathy and Lauren are bookends in a career filled with generous people who, through the sharing of their own heartfelt stories, sparked a deep sense of joy in me.

And so...I will leave Wellness House at the end of the year with the words joy and gratitude carved in my heart, thanks to YOU. I, too, found my tribe at Wellness House and feel blessed to have called this remarkable place home for all these years.

Jeannie Cella
President and CEO

Finding Your Tribe

Lauren Hoffman exudes a warm energy and smile that can light up an empty room; a rare combination of bubbly and calm that draws you in.

Her hair is shortly cropped after growing an inch or two since her last round of chemo. Lauren's eyes light up as she describes her life before cancer – regular runs through the Prairie Path as she trained for marathons, her career in prosthetics/orthotics, and far-reaching plans that stretched toward the future. But at the young age of 22, her life came to a screeching halt when she received the unexpected news of a cancer diagnosis. Lauren's life changed when she walked into an oncology office and learned she had endometrial cancer. While the news was devastating, her doctors said her prognosis was good because of her age and went so far as to let her keep her ovaries so she could have children. Lauren remembers the moment she woke up from surgery and saw her brother and parents standing over her. They relayed the good news that the cancer had been removed. "They got it!" Lauren has always been future oriented, and her positive nature provided her with a new roadmap for the future.

Just after Lauren finished treatment, she learned that her college friend's mom was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. **Lauren did what came naturally to her. She wanted to help. Her friend told her about Walk for Wellness House and she decided to sign up with her brother to show support.** The walk became an annual event for them, and her brother even won the 5K!

Fast forward to 2018, Lauren received more bad news. "Four and a half years after my first diagnosis in 2014, I was diagnosed again and found out it was metastatic. It was fueled by my ovaries! I'm currently in treatment at Northwestern." Lauren was devastated by the news of this second and more challenging cancer diagnosis. After the first diagnosis, Lauren attended a few support groups, but none resonated with her and she couldn't find any young adult groups. The one thing that was different this time around was the fact that Lauren knew about Wellness House. "When I was

diagnosed again, I knew I needed help. I saw Wellness House had a young adult group and knew I had to come here."

Lauren began attending the *Young Adults with Cancer Networking Group* facilitated by Sherri Wick LCPC, Oncology Support Counselor. "I needed to be around a group of people who get it and are going through similar struggles, like trying to start a family and career," said Lauren.

Lauren had always focused on school, her work and others. When Sherri, the facilitator of the young adult group, said "you've got to do you", Lauren realized she had never really focused on herself. **She realized that she was strong and resilient and needed to concentrate on what came naturally to her – a positive spirit.** There isn't a lot that has stayed the same for Lauren after her second cancer. "I'm almost finding my tribe. I've lost some friends because it's a little heavier the second time around, but I've also connected with some people I haven't seen in a while, and I've experienced a change in myself that has been good," said Lauren. "I've had to stop and focus on who I really am."

Lauren has been attending the young adult group for close to a year. The group has even started meeting socially, outside of Wellness House. "We can be silly and laugh or just be in a serious moment. We're all in this together and on the same wavelength," says Lauren. The group has



Lauren Hoffman – Participant

helped Lauren feel connected. "Face to face groups provide a connection that texting and messaging online do not. It's not great for young people to be texting all the time to connect, we need that emotional element. Wellness House brings it all together".

Lauren's second surgery took a toll and her treatment caused so many side-effects that she stopped working. During her cancer experience and time in the young adult group, she found a new passion. "I found out that my disposition is best suited to work with children. Everyone comes from a different place, but I feel positive energy and resiliency is everything. Kids inspire me and help me keep a childlike wonder. I'm excited to go back to work," shared Lauren.

"I'm so glad Wellness House is here. There are other groups in other places, but nothing like this. I'm strong and resilient, and don't give myself enough credit. Wellness House helped me discover that."

Because of your generosity, Lauren has found her tribe and gained insight into her own strength and resilience.

"Before cancer, I used to be shy and reserved and always put other people before myself. Life threw this at me, and I realized I could either choose to learn from it or just drown in it. I was literally facing death, and realized I needed to make my own happiness. I'm relying less on other people to make me happy. I'm stronger than I thought I was, and I didn't give myself enough credit for that."

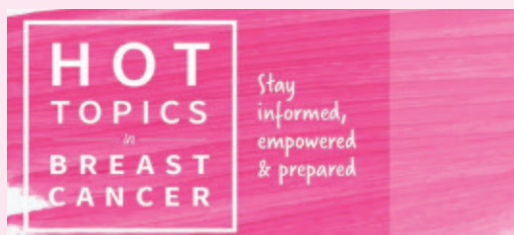
Lauren Hoffman

Information and Education Events Draw Capacity Crowds

Wellness House recently held three Information and Education events which were filled to capacity. The desire and demand for specialized cancer information and updates in cutting edge cancer research was evident as over 450 people learned from top experts in the field.

Anticancer Living – Lorenzo Cohen Ph.D. and Alison Jefferies, MEd

On April 18 and 19, husband and wife team **Lorenzo Cohen Ph.D. and Alison Jefferies, MEd**, authors of *Anticancer Living: Transform Your Life and Health with the Mix of Six*, discussed the current cancer epidemic, how to lower risks of cancer and improve outcomes. During the event, 195 people affected by cancer heard recommendations for anticancer living and how to put these ideas into practice both as an individual and as a family. Topics included: the role family, friends, and community networks play in healthy living and how love and connection lead to healthy cellular function. This event was presented at the main location in Hinsdale and a new venue - UIC Student Center in Chicago.



Hot Topics in Breast Cancer

Each year, top doctors from throughout Chicagoland present the latest information on treatments in breast cancer. On June 22, a record breaking 114 people attended the Hot Topics in Breast Cancer event. The panel and topics included: Breast Imaging, Dr. Deepa Sheth of the University of Chicago; Updates in Medical Oncology, Dr. Olwen Hahn, University of Chicago; Updates in Surgical Oncology, Dr. Rosalinda Alvarado, Rush University; Updates in Radiation Oncology, Dr. Eric Donnelly, Northwestern Medicine; Breast Cancer Survivor, Dr. Susan Hong and Tamara Hamlish, Ph.D. University of Illinois Chicago, and Metastatic Breast Cancer, Dr. Lisa Falum, Northwestern.

Stress and Cancer – Dr. Steven Cole Ph.D.

Dr. Steven Cole Ph.D., a leading expert in Medicine, Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences spoke to three different Wellness House audiences.

Cole has analyzed tumor tissue, blood and brain activity to explore the impact of psychological stress on tumor biology. Dr. Cole's presentation to over 100 program participants explained complex research in a way that was both accessible and meaningful to those who attended. He explained that while stress doesn't cause cancer, it does affect how cancer might metastasize and grow. He also shared that being part of a healthy community leads to a more favorable gene expression and caregiving and nurturing may play a role in reducing stress responses in the brain. This type of research and information underscores the importance of stress management techniques during a cancer journey and speaks to the very foundation of the mission at Wellness House.

As part of the Wellness House Professional Perk series at Wellness House's main location, Steven Cole presented his research to 20 health care professionals. He also shared this information with approximately 100 donors at our annual Lifetime Trustee Dinner.

Swimming Laps and Making Lemonade for Wellness House

All check presentations are special to us, but we were especially thrilled when the young philanthropists described below presented us with their hard-earned donations.

Swimming Laps

When Nate was presented with an opportunity to raise funds for charity, he decided to combine his love for swimming with his love for Wellness House in "Swimming for Charity." His mom said, "He was so excited about raising awareness and raising funds for Wellness House." Nate received some help developing his marketing plan through the Union Church of Hinsdale Giving Club. He also created a table top display and a speech. Nate swam 54 laps without stopping and raised \$2,292. We are so proud of Nate!



Making Lemonade

Our hearts melted when Logan, Riley, Peyton and Ruby stopped by late spring. Their participation in the Walk for Wellness House inspired them to donate proceeds from their lemonade stand to Wellness House. This smart young group created a traveling lemonade stand that went from a soccer game to a softball game accompanied by Walk for Wellness House yard signs. They raised \$164.60.



All of these creative kids have learned how to "feel better inside" by giving of their time and talents to help others. Their generosity will help us provide programs at no cost to prepare and empower people to fully live life with cancer and beyond.



Walk for Wellness House 2019

On May 5, 2019, over 3,000 cancer survivors, families, friends and volunteers gathered together for our annual walk. **More than \$610,000 was raised** to support Wellness House programs. This represents 18% of our annual revenue.

The Walk for Wellness House helps make it possible to offer no cost psychosocial support to people affected by cancer around the Chicago area.

The Inland Real Estate Group of Companies once again showed their spirit of dedication and support to those living with cancer serving as the event's presenting sponsors and **raising over \$132,000 for Wellness House.**

TOP TEAMS:

Team Inland	\$132,177
The Crown Royals Team	\$38,240
Brooks Strong 2019	\$18,255
MJ Shining Stars	\$14,740
50 Shades of Ben Gay	\$13,320

Save the Date for Walk for Wellness House 2020
SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2020

Volunteers are Vital to Wellness House

We couldn't do what we do without volunteers!

Because of volunteers, Wellness House participants enjoy outstanding support during their cancer journey.

We're currently looking for the following volunteers:

Massage Therapist Volunteer: We are looking for massage therapists who would like to donate tune-up or relaxation massages to our participants. We offer 45-minute, fully-clothed massages at our facility to people whose lives have been affected by cancer. We ask for a minimum commitment of one day per month, with two consecutive sessions on that day.

Salon Volunteer: We are looking for licensed cosmetologists to provide hair cutting, wig cutting, and head shaving services in our salon. We are also looking for a volunteer to coordinate these services.

Wellness Programs Coordinator

“helping each person with their specific needs”



Meet Our Experts

Amanda Woods, MS, ACSM/ACS CET, ACSM EP-C, Wellness Programs Coordinator

Amanda Woods has been on staff at Wellness House for six years and just this summer transitioned from her role as Oncology Exercise Coordinator to her new role as Wellness Programs Coordinator. She teaches all levels of exercise classes and conducts preliminary exercise consultations and fitness assessments. In addition to this, Amanda coordinates yoga and stress management volunteers, Unique Boutique volunteers, and contractual staff.

“My favorite part of my job is people welcoming me to travel alongside them on their cancer journey. It’s a very unique situation to be a part of someone’s cancer journey and experience—whether they’re in pre-treatment, during treatment, post-treatment, end of life, wherever they are. Getting to meet them where they are and be a part of that is really special.”

- **Amanda Woods, MS, ACSM/ACS CET, ACSM EP-C, Wellness Programs Coordinator**

When a new participant joins Wellness House, they are required to turn in a medical release and health history. Based on that paperwork, they schedule an exercise consultation with one of the exercise specialists, like Amanda, to talk through their health history, address questions and concerns, and help navigate to the class that will be the best fit for them. Paired with the participant’s routine fitness assessments during their journey at Wellness House, Amanda says she is able to see concrete progress in their health over time.

Amanda also sees progress in the participants’ day-to-day activities. “I see little things every day. Somebody might mention, ‘I couldn’t reach this shelf to put a dish away and now I can,’ or ‘I used to get winded going around the block, but now I can make it around two blocks.’ Or somebody who may have never exercised a day in their life is now coming here multiple days a week to exercise and say how much better they feel, how much more mobile they are, and how much it helps with their activities of daily living. I think it’s huge just to hear that feedback and how it’s affecting their life.”

Amanda takes part in continuing education to learn the best modifications for people affected by cancer, as noted by her certifications from the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Cancer Society. She says it’s important to keep up-to-date on the research that helps determine the best programs for our participants.

At the end of the day, Amanda wants to use her skills in exercise physiology to give back to people who need it the most. “I’ve learned just how influential you can be in somebody’s life without knowing it. To be a part of that is a huge learning experience of how you can be with somebody in their journey and how you can best help them with their specific needs.”

Amanda’s professional highlights

- Earned a B.A. in Exercise Science from Elmhurst College
- Earned an M.S. in Clinical Exercise Physiology from Benedictine University
- Certified Exercise Physiologist by the American College of Sports Medicine
- Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer by the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Cancer Society



Mile Square Health Center Open House

Professionals and Partners Experience Wellness House Programs at Mile Square Health Center



“We are excited to work with the UI Cancer Center to bring our evidence-based programs directly to communities that may have otherwise struggled to access the type of psychosocial and supportive programs we offer,” said Lisa Kolavennu, senior director of programs at Wellness House.

Over 100 healthcare professionals, partners, community stakeholders and donors attended the Wellness House and UI Health Mile Square Health Center Open House on June 20, 2019. The event was presented so professionals and stakeholders could experience programming first hand and see the space where over 40 free psychosocial support programs are presented each month at Mile Square Health Center. Wellness House staff provided experiential sessions of Expressive Arts, Tai Chi and a Smoothie Demonstration. A highlight of the event featured a welcome and remarks made by Henry Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, UI Health Mile Square Health Center, Dr. Robert Winn, Associate Vice Chancellor for Community-Based Practice and Director of University of Illinois Cancer Center, Dr. Susan Hong, Director Cancer Survivorship, University of Illinois Cancer Center and Lisa Kolavennu, Wellness House, Executive Director.

“Cancer survivorship begins at the time of diagnosis and these programs are meant to be a place where patients and their families can learn and gather information and participate in activities that are beneficial to their emotional and physical health,” said Dr. Susan Hong, director of the cancer survivorship program at the UI Cancer Center.

Attendees of the open house learned first-hand what psychosocial support programming looks like at Mile Square Health Center and how life changing support can be to cancer patients. The partnership at UI Health Mile Square Health Center can only exist due to your donations and ongoing support.

Wellness House | Main Location
The Kay & Mike Birck Home of Hope
131 North County Line Road
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

David Blaydes, CFP, MS, RFC, AIF

Charitable Contribution Limits

What are the limits for Donor-Advised Funds and Private Foundations?



Among the big changes in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) were new limits on standard and itemized deductions. These limits and restrictions created new hurdles when planning deductions with tax advantages in mind. An exception was

charitable deduction, which remained an option for high-income individuals looking to create a donation for the charity of their choice.

Donor-Advised Funds and Private Foundations.

When making a charitable donation, two avenues to consider are donor-advised funds (DAFs) and private foundations (PFs). DAFs are established by public charities as a philanthropic vehicle; the donor can allow the donation to grow over time and advise on grants from the fund (assuming compliance approval), all while having an immediate tax benefit for that initial contribution. Private foundations offer total control in terms of the grants you've made and their distribution.^{1,2}

In contrast, a private foundation tends to be larger in size (sometimes in the millions of dollars) in comparison to DAFs (which can be set up with as little as \$5,000) and generally represent a larger

and less-flexible method of charitable giving.³

How much can you give? There are different tax considerations to keep in mind. Your limit in contributing to a private foundation is 30% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) in the year you make that donation. On the other hand, the same limit for a DAF is up to 60% of your AGI.¹

What about long-term appreciated marketable securities? Your limit to a private foundation is 20% of AGI for the year of the donation. For a DAF, it's 30% of AGI.¹

Advantages to consider. There are advantages to both private foundations and donor-advised funds, both in terms of tax deductions and the control that you may exercise over how the funds are dispersed.^{1,4}

However, you should also be aware that the I.R.S. is on the lookout for those who may use the flexibility of donor-advised funds to create improper distributions, which may, for instance, directly benefit a donor's family. For this reason, among others, it's best to have several conversations with a trusted tax and financial professional, who can both assist you in the creation of any such entity as well as help you manage your charitable giving.^{1,4}

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Citations.

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4 - irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/donor-advised-funds [4/2/18]

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