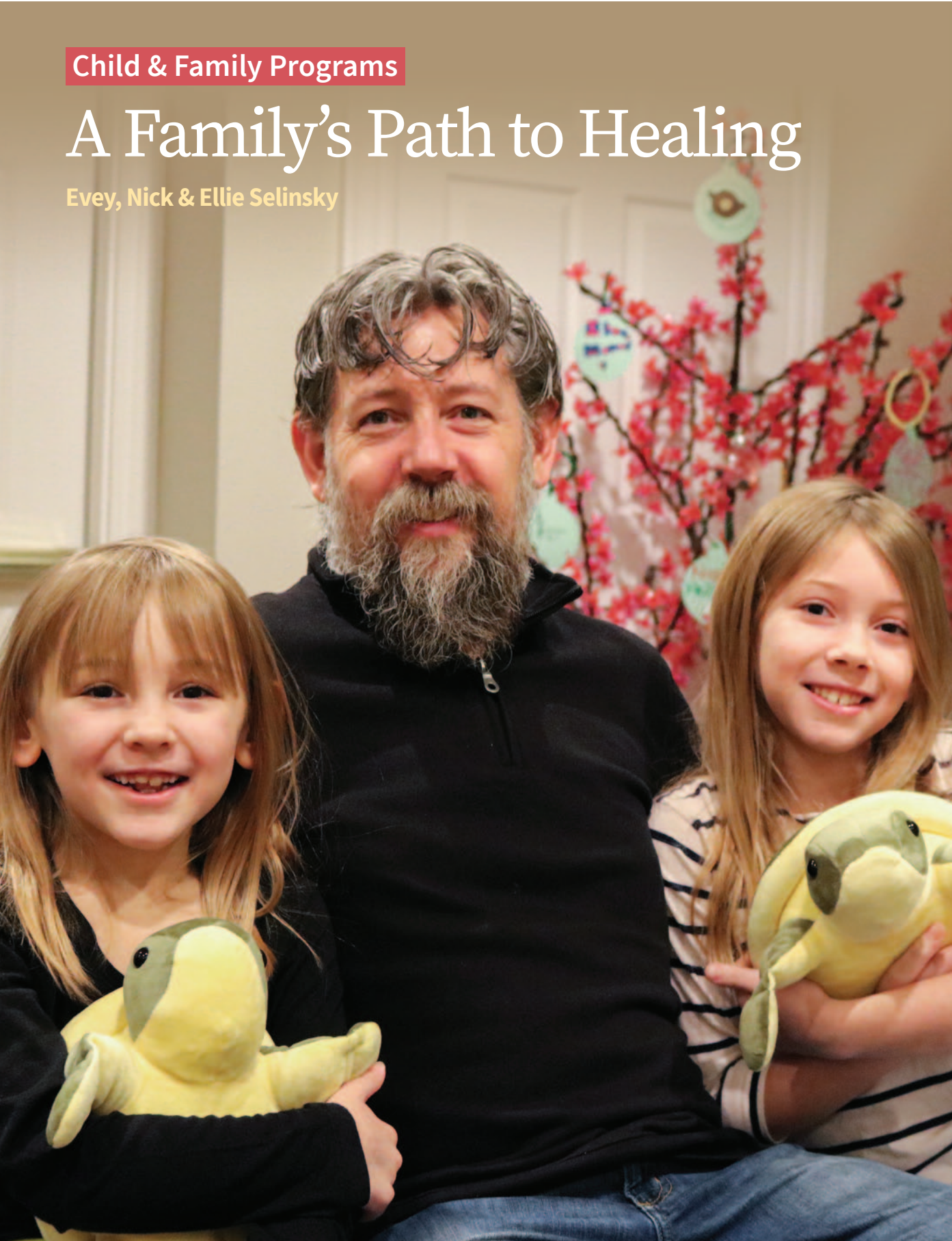


Child & Family Programs

# A Family's Path to Healing

Evey, Nick & Ellie Selinsky



Wellness News

# Joie De Vivre Ball a Huge Success!



**The Joie De Vivre ball**, chaired by Anna and Nick Fiascone, Sarah and Sam Richardson and Christine and John Trainer was an inspiring, sold-out event with 576 guests in attendance at the Ritz-Carlton in Chicago. \$1.1 million was raised for people affected by cancer. This included a \$300,000 matching gift, made by a collective group of donors to the newly established Jeannie Cella Child & Family Fund. This fund is part of the Wellness House endowment and will support programs for children and families in perpetuity. In response to the match, over \$330,000 was raised during the paddle raise. These funds will support current Child and Family Programs.

Guests dined under crystal chandeliers in the Ritz ballroom. The evening featured a silent and live auction, followed by a moving video presentation produced by Maureen Muldoon, with an original song created by Cathy Richardson. The video featured three families who have used Wellness House Child and Family Programs and experienced a loss in the family.

#### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The next Wellness House ball will be held on Saturday, October 17, 2020 at The Geraghty. Ball chairs Kersten and Geoff Regnery and Rob and Allison Knuepfer are already hard at work planning an incredible evening.

Check [wellnesshouse.org](http://wellnesshouse.org) for updates and details.

## Dear Friends,

As we enter the new decade, we have so much to celebrate! 2020 marks the 30th Anniversary of Wellness House, a milestone that includes 41,000 people whose lives have been impacted by our programs since 1990. Our anniversary offers us a chance to reflect on the strength and wisdom of the past, appreciate the life-changing support provided in the present, and put forth plans for the future that move us closer to our vision where all people affected by cancer thrive.

It all began with a small group of local community members who had a collective goal to build a supportive community around the experience of cancer. Knowing first-hand that cancer can create a sense of isolation and uncertainty, Lorraine Wolf helped found Wellness House with the idea that supportive care can change lives. Because of Lorraine and other passionate individuals just like her, Wellness House opened its doors in 1990 and engaged in a bold mission, in the living room of a small house, to build that community.

Since those early days, our program offerings have grown to over 470 programs a month at locations throughout Chicagoland. The road from the past to the present has helped individuals in such profound ways that it's nearly impossible to sum up the positive impact made by founders, donors, volunteers and staff over the last 30 years – but it **can** be found in the individual stories and experiences. In this newsletter, Nick Selinsky shares how Wellness House has helped his family during his wife's entire cancer experience, from the day of diagnosis to the day she passed away. He shares how Wellness House supported his family through grieving, healing and into a future where they can thrive as a family.

As we look to the future, we recognize there are many more people who are in need of our services and we embrace the challenge to bring our programs to new communities. Our hope is that all those who are struggling with the realities of cancer will have access to the life changing support that we began offering 30 years ago.

We simply would not be where we are today if it weren't for strong leaders, visionaries and donors like you who have stood side by side with us over the past 30 years. Thank you for changing lives, past, present and future.

**Lisa K. Kolavennu, MA, LCPC**  
Executive Director

**Robert C. Knuepfer III**  
Board Chair

# A family's path to healing

**Ellie and Evey Selinsky love the same things as most nine and seven-year-olds—popsicles, playmobiles, turtles, mac and cheese. They like playing with their friends, making crafts, and being silly.** But for these sisters, some of the joys of life are often associated with something more dire—their late mother's battle with cancer.

In the spring of 2014, after going to the emergency room for stomach pains, their mother Jennifer was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. "Our mom had cancer and was in the hospital for a while," nine-year-old Ellie said. "And then she didn't have cancer anymore, but she got it again and had to go back." Jennifer went through treatment programs with some success, but in due course, the cancer recurred. She then participated in a trial program, which is when things took a turn for the worse. It wasn't the cancer that ultimately took her life—it was the complications from the cure.

**During Jennifer's battle with cancer, she had come to Wellness House to take part in the support groups. As a caregiver, her husband Nick sporadically attended programs with her. "It was eye-opening for me to see the support here and the way the programs ran," he explained. "And it was really helpful for her to be around people who understood what she was going through."**

While Jennifer was regularly involved in support groups, Nick and the girls weren't actively involved in Wellness House until after she passed away. "I wasn't sure how I was going to find help. I wasn't sure who to turn to or where to go," Nick said. "I knew that I needed it, but I wasn't sure how to ask, or even who to ask. Fortunately, Wellness House was already known to me. I knew it was a good resource, and it was just a matter of coming here and talking to the staff."

When Jennifer passed in the fall of 2017, Nick started bringing Ellie and Evey to Wellness House for the Child and Family programs. It was important to him that the girls had professionals they could talk to about what they were feeling, but even more importantly, to also have friends in the same boat as them. Friends with the same experience, who knew how to talk, or not talk, about cancer.

Two years later, Ellie and Evey still love coming to the Turtles Bereavement Group every Monday night. They like the activities and crafts they do in group, but they especially like the group's stuffed animal turtles. "We wanted to get a pet turtle, but we can't," explained seven-year-old Evey. "So now each of the groups has a little mascot that we named. Ours is Shelly and theirs is Shelby."

"Wellness House has been really instrumental in our family's coping during our loss and healing afterwards. We're very thankful for it."

**Nick Selinsky**



And while the girls are off playing with their friends and stuffed turtles, their father goes to the parents' group held at the same time. Nick appreciates the time he gets to spend with other parents who have lost a spouse, but he also cherishes the family time that surrounds their weekly trips to Wellness House. "It's a nice tradition to have on Monday nights," said Nick. "We get some really important time at Wellness House, then we go out for dinner afterwards. It's a tradition that we've had now for two years."

Nick also takes advantage of the networking group for bereaved dads, which meets on a monthly basis for support and parenting tips for single fathers. He says it's a very different dynamic than the Turtles Bereavement Group, but each are incredibly helpful in their own way.

**The Selinsky family has used the resources at Wellness House throughout the entire cancer journey—from Jennifer attending the support groups for her diagnosis, to Nick and the girls attending bereavement groups after she passed.** Wellness House has been a pillar for them through the grief process, the coping process, and now the healing process.

**Nick put it well when he said, "Wellness House helped Jennifer during her cancer journey because she frequently made use of the support groups. That really helped her in a lot of ways."** Then for me and the girls, it's helped afterwards to try and cope, to remember her, and to figure out how to move on. It's helped us find other people that are going through the same thing."

# Celebrating 30 Years with Founder Lorraine Wolfe

As Wellness House celebrates its 30th anniversary, we are recognizing the commitment of those who paved the road for where we are now, and set the framework for our future. **Lorraine Wolfe**, one of our founders, was highly influential in Wellness House from the very beginning, starting with the initial fundraising, and continuing her support to this day.



Theresa and Lorraine Wolfe

**Lorraine's Wellness House story began** when her husband was in the hospital for bladder cancer in 1988. Their family was large, so during his treatment, there was always someone visiting the hospital to keep him company. The family served as his support community as he faced his battle with cancer. But as Lorraine and her children noticed, not everyone in the hospital was fortunate enough to have this kind of support system. Many people spent their days in treatment alone. The Wolfe family often went around greeting other patients, hoping to brighten the day of those who had no visitors.

Once Lorraine's husband passed away, she started looking for a way to give back to her community. "For me, my life has always been about how I can serve other people," Lorraine explained. "Even as a child, that was drilled into me. The purpose of my life was to serve other people."

She soon learned about a man named Harold Benjamin who was visiting from California to present about The Wellness Community, a cancer support system he founded on the West Coast. After attending this meeting with her daughter Theresa, Lorraine was all in. She was drawn to the idea of creating support for those without a community, especially support that costs nothing for the participants.

In order to form a similar cancer support community in the Chicago area, Lorraine and the other founders were tasked with raising \$200,000 to fund the first year. The group worked hard to raise all necessary funds by meeting with people in the community who were touched by cancer and well positioned to give their support. As part of her fundraising efforts, Lorraine started hosting informational meetings at her home. She had no trouble doing her part to raise money because she truly believed in the work of the organization and she just spoke from her heart.

This passionate group of people quickly assembled a board of directors and Wellness House was officially launched in 1990. In the beginning they met at various locations but ended up securing a location in Hinsdale. After outgrowing that space, in 1993 they rallied support and rebuilt a new house entirely from donated time and materials. And over the past 30 years, Wellness House has continued expanding in size and scope. It started just with programs for cancer patients, then included spouses, then children and beyond.

Lorraine is especially happy to see the way that Wellness House has more recently branched into other communities. She recognizes that not everyone has the ability to hop in a car and drive over to Hinsdale. By offering programs at partner locations throughout the Chicago area, she believes we will enable people to more easily get the cancer support they need.

Ever since the foundation of Wellness House, Lorraine has been one of the many people instrumental to its success. She's been devoted from the very beginning, volunteering her time, energy and expertise to see Wellness House thrive. As her daughter Theresa puts it, not a single person talks to Lorraine without finding out about Wellness House. Her coffee table is filled with newsletters and reports and she never leaves home without a flyer. Lorraine also continues to be a prolific note writer who thanks donors and encourages participants every chance she gets.

***We are so thankful for Lorraine and the people like her who helped grow Wellness House into the life changing resource that it is today.***



Jeannie and Paul Cella with their family



Jeannie Cella and Lauren Haarlow Artist: Stephanie Lord

## Wishing Jeannie Farewell

On Wednesday, December 4, we held a donor event at Ruth Lake Country Club celebrating the success of the 25th Anniversary Campaign, Wellness Beyond Walls, and the remarkable career of Jeannie Cella. The successful 25th Anniversary Campaign, chaired by Cindy Klima and Sakeba Issa, with honorary chairs Dick Burrige Sr and Fred Krehbiel, enabled us to safeguard the main location, The Kay and Mike Birck Home of Hope and key programs while extending our reach into more communities through partnerships and technology. It was a touching evening with countless stories told about the impact Jeannie has made on others during her time at Wellness House. The night concluded with a gift to Jeannie from the board—a beautiful, hand-painted rendition of the house.

*Thank you to everyone who came and helped make it such a special event!*

### Staying informed, empowered and prepared



Each year, top doctors from throughout the Chicagoland area present the latest information on treatments in prostate cancer. On September 28, 2019, over 50 people attended our Hot Topics in Prostate Cancer event at Wellness House.

**The morning started off with a panel of physicians from Rush, UChicago, and Northwestern Medicine.** They each took time sharing the latest research in prostate cancer treatment options, including chemotherapy, surgery and radiation. Later, a Naturopathic Provider from Cancer Treatment Centers of America spoke about how nutrition can play a major part in managing side effects. The day concluded with a presentation on Brachytherapy from Dr. Moran of the Chicago Prostate Cancer Center.

**Attendees had the chance to ask questions** about how these new treatment options might work or seek further insight on particular medical issues. Informational events like Hot Topics in Prostate Cancer help equip people with cancer to make informed choices.

**We were thrilled with this year’s success of Hot Topics in Prostate Cancer, and already have it scheduled for next year on Saturday, September 26, 2020!**

# Wellness Oncology Child & Family Specialist, empowering parents and connecting with children.



“I really enjoy hosting the special events because it gives me a chance to see the families and kids just being families and kids. They put the cancer aside and just have a good time.”

- **Gina Danehl, LCSW, Oncology Child and Family Specialist**

## Meet Our Experts

### **Gina Danehl, LCSW, Oncology Child and Family Specialist**

When a family member has a cancer diagnosis, they often struggle to find the best way to explain it to their kids. This is where Gina Danehl, our new Child and Family Specialist, comes in and uses her expertise to walk the parents through explaining cancer on an age-appropriate level for the kids.

Gina Danehl’s background with family mental health, counseling and parental support programs set her up with the right experience to come join the Child and Family programs at Wellness House this past June.

Gina has worked in child and family support services throughout her career, so as she transitioned to Wellness House, she was excited for the opportunity to focus on oncology support. In her role, Gina provides family consultations, individual counseling sessions and a variety of different support groups. She also coordinates several special events throughout the year for kids and families.

According to Gina, once a parent can successfully explain cancer to their children, it “gives them a sense of relief” and “empowers them to be able to support their kids.” Family consultations also give all family members a safe place to talk through their struggles and address the stresses that cancer brings to a family.

Beyond the family consultations, Gina facilitates individual counseling and bereavement support with children, teens and parents who need the additional one-on-one time. She is also in charge of Child and Family support groups, which are available for kids ages 4 through 18. There are general support groups, bereavement groups and even survivor groups for those with a diagnosis themselves.

One thing that Gina especially enjoys about her role is seeing the connection that siblings have. She says, “to see the way that they look out for each other, take care of each other and are just so kind to one another—it’s incredible to see that bond and connection.”

From support groups to holiday parties, the Child and Family programs allow kids and parents alike to come and spend time with people who understand what each other are going through.

### **Gina’s professional highlights**

- Earned a B.A. in Social Work from Illinois State University
- Earned an M.A. in Social Work from University of Illinois at Chicago
- Licensed in Illinois as a Clinical Social Worker
- Member of the American Psychosocial Oncology Society



## Skating for Wellness House

When Lily was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, her friends at the ice-skating rink wanted to do something special for her. On Saturday, September 21 they held Skate Fest at the Ridgeland Commons Ice Rink in Oak Park to raise awareness of thyroid cancer and support organizations that have been helping Lily throughout her journey. It was a large event with over 300 people and raised money through raffle tickets, silent auctions, food, and jewelry made by Lily herself. During the program, Lily's friends performed old skating routines of hers and Lily herself gave a touching speech. **Through this event, Lily and her friends raised over \$15,000—\$8,652 of which was donated to Wellness House!**

## Spooky Spectacular and Polar Express



As 2019 ended, we held two fun holiday events for kids and their families! In October, we hosted Spooky Spectacular, a Halloween

celebration. 62 kids came dressed in their favorite costumes, participated in festive games and crafts, and of course, we provided them with some spooky snacks!

In December, we held our annual Polar Express Pajama Party. Families joined us for snacks, reindeer games, crafts, caroling, a photo booth, and a showing of The Polar Express. We also had a special visit from Santa and the Hinsdale Fire Department, who came with a gift for each child in attendance. It was a magical night for all who were involved!

Thank you to the Hinsdale Fire Department for their generosity, the volunteers who gave up their time, and our donors who make it all possible. **Because of your support, we are able to help families with a common cancer experience connect with one another through fun and play.**

# Walk for Wellness House Corporate Teams

**Save the date —**  
Walk for Wellness House 2020  
is Sunday, May 3



**Teams are historically a critical component in the success of the annual walk.** While many individuals rally around creating a team, we also encourage the formation of corporate teams! Companies who seek to have a strong giving culture often invest in their local communities. By contributing through the creation of a team, companies can join the fun of raising money for Wellness House and come together to show their support on the day of the walk.

We are always excited to have a team from our long-time sponsor, The Inland Real Estate Group. This year we are also happy to introduce a new corporate team from The Joint Commission, sparked by interest after their October breast cancer awareness initiative.

If you and your company are interested in forming a corporate team for Walk for Wellness House, please reach out to Liza Larsen at 630.654.5112 or llarsen@wellnesshouse.org for more information.

***“Our support for Wellness House runs throughout our company and has for the last 26 years. Giving back has been at the heart of our corporate culture since our founding. Every May, Inland employees and their families look forward to participating in the Walk for Wellness House event. The feedback we get from our employees is just phenomenal. They not only enjoy raising money, but it is an honor to support such an important cause that educates and helps cancer patients and their families living with cancer.”***

**- Bob Baum, Wellness House Lifetime Trustee, Co-founder, Executive Vice President and General Counsel of The Inland Real Estate Group of Companies, Inc.**

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



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David Blaydes and his team may be reached at [info@rpiplan.com](mailto:info@rpiplan.com) or 630.778.8100. [www.rpiplan.com](http://www.rpiplan.com)

### Our Mission

Wellness House envisions a community where all people affected by cancer thrive. Offered at no cost, and as a complement to medical treatment, our programs educate, support, and empower participants so they will improve their physical and emotional well-being.

Learn more about us at [wellnesshouse.org](http://wellnesshouse.org)

## How to Make a Difference for Charity

**Estate gifts.** These are deferred gifts you make after your lifetime – without impact on your current lifestyle. You can make a bequest to a charity through your will or a revocable living trust, which can reduce your taxable estate. A gift of a paid-up life insurance policy to a qualified charity can give you an immediate income-tax deduction equal to its replacement value. You can also gift an IRA or retirement plan account to a qualified charity or non-profit organization upon your death.

### Questions?

Please consult RPI at 630-778-8100 x100.

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