

# Luciana Butera

**A Place to Call Home**

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Wellness News



Fully live life  
with cancer and beyond.

# Walk for Wellness House

for LIVING with CANCER

## Sunday May 1, 2022

Wellness House • 131 N County Line Rd  
Hinsdale, IL • 8:00am • Rain or Shine

Register today! [walk.wellnesshouse.org](http://walk.wellnesshouse.org)

JOIN US FOR A **FREE** ONLINE EVENT  
Thursday, April 14 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. CT

WELLNESS HOUSE PRESENTS:

### Kate Bowler

**No Cure for Being Human**

**KATE BOWLER**, New York Times best-selling author, Duke professor, incurable optimist

In the wake of a sudden stage IV colon cancer diagnosis at the age of 35, Kate Bowler was left asking the question, how do you move forward with a life you didn't choose?

Presented to people affected by cancer

Register at [wellnesshouse.org/bowler](http://wellnesshouse.org/bowler) or call 630.323.5150

Wellness House for LIVING with CANCER

## Dear Friends,

Spring is a season of hope and change. The anticipation of tiny shoots of green and warmer days feels pronounced as we continue our transition back to in-person programs at Wellness House. The past two years have been weighty for so many of us, particularly for those experiencing cancer. And yet, through the wintry days of cancer, you have helped provide a space filled with hope and light – a home.

During the past year, over 500 programs made their way into homes every month. Individuals, families and caregivers from all backgrounds and locations experienced the strength of community through support groups, informational programs and events like our Happy Heart Valentine Party where kids enjoyed crafts, cookie creations and magic. In the story on page four of this newsletter, Luciana Butera shares how she found hope and healing right in her own home as a result of our online programs. At a time when her cancer diagnosis threw her dreams of a new life in the United States off course, Wellness House programs brought her community and shared experiences when she needed a space to connect and feel understood.

Last year, Luciana attended the Walk for Wellness House and found comfort in joining her fellow support group members so that others like her could attend programs at no cost, in person and online. We join Luciana, and hope you will too, in her excitement on May 1 as we come together for an in person Walk for Wellness House. Our doors are open, and we can't wait to see you. We are beyond grateful to you for all the ways you have supported Wellness House.



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



**Lauren Staniar Haarlow**  
Board Chair

# Come and Join us at the Walk!

**The Walk is back LIVE and in-person!** We are excited to be together and celebrate the community's steadfast support of Wellness House at our annual Walk for Wellness House on **Sunday, May 1, 2022**. As in years past, you can choose to do a 3K Walk, a 5K Fun Run or a 5K Timed Run starting at Wellness House in Hinsdale and throughout the surrounding streets (the 10 Step Walk is also an option). You can also choose to "Walk Your Way" and the place, time and distance of your walk is completely up to you! Make an even greater impact by asking friends and family to join or support you!

**The Walk is always a special and inspiring celebration of community and the impact that we make on the lives of people facing a cancer diagnosis.** This year, we are even more inspired to come together after two very long years of social distancing and isolation. While the ways we come together may be different, the support that our community and business partners have provided throughout the pandemic has been unwavering. **Please join us in celebration of the spirit of community and support that keeps us going every day!** #WelcomeHome



## Volunteer Needs

**Volunteers are vital to Wellness House. We couldn't do what we do without volunteers! They make it possible for Wellness House participants to enjoy outstanding support during their cancer journey.**

**Front Desk Volunteer:** Making 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 our busy programs. **4 hour shift, once a week.**

**Saturday Courtyard Volunteer:** The Courtyard is our local consignment/retail store that sells a variety of fine furnishings. All proceeds benefit Wellness House. Whether it's helping customers or setting up eye-catching displays, we would benefit from retail or computer support. **4 hour shift, 1-2 shifts per month.**

**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.**

**Database Support:** We would love volunteer assistance on database projects. If you are skilled at Excel and you love data/numbers, we are looking for you!

## Making History *Under One Sky!*



**Wellness House magic was on display throughout the western suburbs at our first ever Friday night, multiple location fundraising event held on October 15, 2021.** More than 550 guests gathered together in three different venues, connected by livestream technology, to celebrate and support the impact that Wellness House has on people affected by cancer in our community.

Wellness House participant Kate shared the brave and poignant story of her family's journey with cancer and how Wellness House helped them through it, which inspired attendees to enthusiastically and generously support Wellness House that evening during the live auction and paddle raise. **Overall fundraising came in at over \$800,000, breaking previous records.** Event revenue will support Wellness House programming throughout the year, as we continue to connect and empower people affected by cancer, both online and in-person, all Under One Sky.



# A Place to call HOME

**Luciana Butera** finds a home away from home at Wellness House.

**FOR** Luciana Butera, moving to the United States in 2016 was an exciting opportunity filled with new adventures and exciting possibilities. However, in 2019, just within a few years of uprooting her life from Brazil, she was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. This wasn't the kind of adventure she was hoping to find. Processing this diagnosis was difficult, but it was even more so for Luciana as she navigated living with cancer on top of living in a new country.

Luciana underwent a mastectomy in August 2019 and realized she might need additional support. At the beginning of September, she began attending an in-person support-group meeting Wellness House conducted through Rush Oak Park Hospital. "I was first introduced to Wellness House through a pamphlet, and after three times of attending meetings, I wasn't sure if I was ready to participate. It was also hard to get there, so I stopped going," she says. After the pandemic began in March 2020, all Wellness House programs went online, and the convenience made a huge difference to Luciana. With online capabilities, she began to attend the Rush Oak Park Breast Cancer Support Group. **"We are able to share our stories without judgment, and people are there to help you understand and work through side effects of medications,"** she says. She was and is able to experience various activities and programs such as yoga, Tai Chi, Pink Ribbon Fitness, nutrition classes, Hot Topics in Breast Cancer, pastel drawing classes, and so much more online. She continues to attend programs for the invaluable knowledge and support she receives from other participants, staff, and volunteers. "It's the true definition of a support group when you need them the most for emotional support, which is so important," she says.

What's even more enlightening for Luciana is that everyone has different perspectives and outlooks and different ways of thinking through life. "It's really inclusive and diverse," she says. "You have women from other countries like me, you have all ages from their 20s to even 70s, and everyone

has a different background with different voices and are in different stages of life." Through various programs, Luciana's support network continues to expand. **"You are able to find support and you're able to make friends for life,"** she says. Being so far from Brazil and her parents, Luciana feels at home at Wellness House with her new community of friends and support system. "It's nice to have a safe space you can go to, whether it's in-person or online."

Every cancer journey is different and with it comes many challenges and surprises. "The way others felt about my experience is not how I felt," she says. Backed with her pharmaceutical background and her positive attitude, in her mind, there was no need to feel sorry for her, because it was stage three cancer, not stage four. She often found the fear was more on other's end; not hers. She felt the need to let others know that she was okay.

Additionally, Luciana was very lucky to have a strong support system by her side. Her husband and mother-in-law would make meals for her and her family and friends would often check in on her. **"Family-and-friend support was surprising,"** she says, especially during the height of the pandemic. The support enabled her to look at life from a different lens. "I wasn't taking life for granted, but cancer allowed me to see things from another perspective."

But even with such a positive attitude and strong support system, it still felt isolating at times. She found the assistance she received from Wellness House priceless and was even more surprised by the overwhelming support she received from others attending the programs. Luciana



never felt alone with her fellow participants. “You’re not alone, and it’s not just you,” she says. “It’s less scary.” With each meeting, she witnesses a transformation not just within herself but with others too. “It’s nice to see when people come to a meeting scared, and by the end, you see relief.”

Luciana is passionate about the annual Walk for Wellness House event that raises funds to continue free programs.

She participated in her first walk in 2020, themed Walk Your Way, where she did just that, and in 2021, she teamed up with a group of other survivors and participants. Here she was able to meet face-to-face with other participants for the first time after countless online meetings she’s had with them. The bonus was that by having a team, they could raise even more money. **“This year, we are going to work harder to match donations,” she says. “For me,**

**it’s a pleasure and something I can do to help Wellness House support other people going through the same thing as me.”**

Luciana continues to see Wellness House as a beacon of hope, inspiration and a place to call home. “Cancer gives you a chance to be thankful for things around you and see things with a new perspective,” she says. “Here, you are able to find the support and make friends for life.”

## The Most Wonderful Time of the Year



**Amy and Brian Cowell have been part of the family at Wellness House since they first began attending programs** in 2009, when Brian was diagnosed with aggressive colon cancer just two months after they were married. Unfortunately Brian passed away in 2014, but Amy’s commitment to Wellness House never faltered and she continues to live every day in his honor. Every year Amy transforms their home in Darien into “The Christmas House” and welcomes all to enjoy the dozens of inflatables, a magical Christmas village display and thousands of twinkling lights. To embody the true spirit of the season, Santa is stationed next to a donation box, so

that everyone enjoying the holiday display has the opportunity to donate to Wellness House. Many thanks to Amy for creating a meaningful way for people to give to Wellness House, so that we can continue to welcome families like the Cowells when they need us.

## Tax Efficient Planned Giving – A Wellness House Story

*A real-life Wellness House story on leaving a legacy.*



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)

**We met a gentleman who was a participant at Wellness House and had the following situation.**

- **HIGHLY APPRECIATED STOCKS:** He had a handful of stocks that had greatly appreciated. He wanted to sell them in favor of a more diversified income-oriented portfolio, but the taxes he would have paid on the appreciation when selling them was too much.
- **ANNUAL INCOME TAXES:** Due to the extent of the dividends and other income, his annual income taxes were very high.
- **HE WANTED TO LEAVE A LEGACY:** He was very appreciative of the services he had received from Wellness House and other charities and wanted to leave a legacy by donating to them. However, he did not wish to do so until passing and wanted some tax breaks until then.

**Solution: Charitable Remainder Trust.**

### How it works.

A Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) was established with the assistance of a local attorney.

- The highly appreciated stocks were transferred to the trust.
- The stocks were sold and since they were in the trust, no income taxes were owed.
- A well-diversified income-oriented portfolio was obtained.
- The income was paid to Bob of which most of it was tax free due to the trust.
- Upon Bob’s passing the income continued to his sister, again on a tax efficient basis.

**Upon the passing of the sister, the trust assets were paid to the Charities fulfilling Bob’s original goal of leaving a legacy.**

**Summary: CRT’s are designed to incentivize charitable giving in exchange for significant tax benefits. Please contact us if you would like to learn how the use of one could benefit you.**

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# New Director of Programs brings years of oncology support expertise to leadership role.



- Maigenete Mengesha, Ph.D.  
Director of Programs

"I feel fortunate to be able to grow with an organization that I've been at for 8 years and to be able to integrate research, health psychology, social justice and multiculturalism into my role as Director of Programs."

## Meet Our Experts — Maigenete Mengesha

**Maigenete Mengesha, Ph.D., Director of Programs**

Maigenete was trained at the University of Wisconsin in a counseling psychology program with an emphasis on multicultural competence and social justice. Her eclectic perspectives were displayed in her doctoral dissertation: Seeking Relief from Depression: The Experiences of African American Women Who are Religious. In 2014, she joined Wellness House. "When I started as an Oncology Support Counselor, my background in health psychology, community counseling, and multicultural competencies were a great fit with the Wellness House model. I was able to learn about the oncology component and, guided by participants' stories, I developed a rich knowledge base and expertise in psycho-oncology support," said Maigenete.

Maigenete joined Wellness House when programming was being expanded through community and medical partnerships in Chicago. "I was so excited about going out to the community and collaborating with partners such as Mercy Hospital to serve populations who otherwise might not receive psychosocial support. Working to minimize cancer health inequities was a meaningful part of my work and continues to be," shared Maigenete. After two years, she was promoted to Senior Oncology Support Counselor and facilitated groups at the main location in Hinsdale, partner locations in Chicago, and then online at the start of the pandemic in 2020.

In November 2021, Maigenete was promoted to Director of Programs. Her education, depth of clinical skills, and the participant experiences she has been privileged to witness give her a unique perspective to direct the design and implementation of programs for all locations. "I'm excited about integrating my health psychology community-based perspectives with an understanding of the cancer burden in marginalized communities to support our strategic plan and align our overall program plans and goals so that all people affected by cancer thrive."

### Maigenete's Professional Highlights

- B.S. in Psychology from University of Wisconsin-Madison
- M.S. & Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Predoctoral internship at (CACTC) Chicago Area Christian Training Consortium (Cornerstone Counseling Center of Chicago & Lawndale Christian Health Center)

# Coming Together - Online and In-Person

**Wellness House** is bustling with both online and in-person programs and events.

Participants have shared experiences from the comfort of their homes and in their cars at family drive through events. We are all excited about the return to more in-person programs.

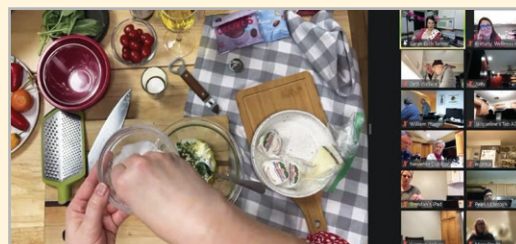


## Happy Hearts Party

There was much laughing, chatting and many smiling faces during the annual Happy Hearts Family Party held online this year. After a magic show by Gary Kantor, Kids made Valentines' Day heart wreaths and foam picture frames while listening to music from the movie Encanto. The night was capped off with cookie decorating, which kids loved and gobbled up as the evening came to a delicious end.

*"The kids really enjoyed the Happy Hearts Party. Thanks for always making them feel special!"*

- Participant



## Some Enchanted Evening

Thanks to the fabulous team of board members, volunteers, staff, chef Sarah Beth, and musician, entertainer and Wellness House ambassador Jeffrey Deutsch who made this year's Some Enchanted Evening a wonderful event once again.

Participants had loads of fun in the comforts of their own home learning how to create a visually pleasing vegetarian charcuterie board, listen to incredible tunes, enjoy good food and good company. There was lots of chopping, mixing, singing, dancing and even a few special appearances by four-legged family friends.



In-Person Art Class



Holiday Party



Polar Express Drive-Thru

## Coming Back Together Again

We began our transition to in-person classes and programs in March 2020 and it felt great to share experiences in the same room. Over the next few months, more programs and events will transition back to in-person. You can feel the excitement in the room as we all begin to come back together.



You'll feel better inside.

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

## Have you included Wellness House in your will or estate plan?



*"The bottom fell out when I was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. The stress was almost unbearable. Handling it alone was unthinkable. Thankfully, that's when I found Wellness House."*

– Sara, Wellness House Participant

**When you include Wellness House in your will or estate plan, you help ensure we will always be here for people like Sara and their families.**

To learn more, contact Mary Kreller at  
[mkreller@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:mkreller@wellnesshouse.org).

### Monthly donations change lives all year long.

A monthly gift of \$10 or more can help people to fully live life with cancer and beyond.

#### Thank you to our generous grantors:

Guy A. and N. Kay Arboit Charitable Trust  
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**The Courtyar**   
You'll treasure the experience.

A Donation/Consignment Shop  
of Quality Home Furnishings  
to benefit Wellness House.

**ShopTheCourtyard.com**  
for weekly "featured items" as a preview  
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**Hours:** Wednesday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
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