

A safe space to share

see page 4



Wellness News

Dear Friends,

I often feel excited when fall approaches as we begin fresh routines and anticipate all the things a new season can bring. Change can feel exhilarating as new crisp cool air arrives or contemplative as colorful leaves fall to the ground. At the same time, change can be difficult and unwanted - and that's why we're here.

A cancer diagnosis can bring a series of changes; to good health, to stability, to the future, to the ability to work, to relationships, and to everyday life. The sudden shift and sense of loss can be felt by those who are diagnosed as well as their loved ones.

Throughout it all, Wellness House is right there, all in and ready to help people navigate changes from the first moment of diagnosis. Catherine and Homer's experience mentioned in the story on page 4 of this newsletter shares how new hybrid programs enable them to attend in-person programs right from home. They can log in, participate in an in-person group, and share honest feelings with people going through the exact same thing in a setting where in-person and online mesh together as one - all in at the same moment.

We're excited about what the future holds for Wellness House, a future that will support even more people as they cope with cancer. You have been an important part of what we've done so far and what's to come. Our expanded model of program delivery, in-person, online, on-demand, and now new hybrid programs, provide unparalleled access so that anyone at any time can weather the devastating changes that cancer can bring. Everyone and anyone can be all in. I invite you to be ALL IN at our annual ball on Saturday, October 15 at Four Seasons Hotel Chicago. We hope to see you there and thank you for your commitment of energy and resources to those enduring the hardships of cancer.

In Friendship,



Lisa K. Kolavennu, MA, LCPC
Executive Director



Monte Henige
Board Chair

“all in” for Wellness House

The Ball is back in Chicago!

After two years of non-traditional fundraising events, the annual Wellness House Ball will return to the ballroom on **Saturday, October 15, 2022, at the Four Seasons Chicago**. The theme of this year’s Ball, “All In”, celebrates the convergence of passion, expertise and support that happens at Wellness House, improving the lives of people with cancer and their families. We look forward to celebrating with the community that has been “All In” supporting our mission for more than 30 years. Guests will be seated together at long tables and will experience a meaningful program of storytelling, as well as a live auction and paddle raise.

Co-Chairs **Lauren** and **Matt Houder** and **Dottie** and **Todd Martin** are planning a memorable evening recognizing the many ways that Wellness House makes an impact on people with cancer in our region.

The “wine cellar” led by **Tina** and **Jeffrey Weller** will feature something for everyone, with a variety of fixed price wines available for purchase to be enjoyed at the Ball or taken home. To cap off a lively and momentous evening, Time Chicago will provide live music for dancing until midnight.



For more information, or to purchase tickets or wines from the Wine Cellar, visit wellnesshouse.org/ball-2022



Volunteer Needs

Volunteers are vital to Wellness House. 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 appreciate 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!

Professional Photographer: We are looking for a photographer for select events & program photos.



New hybrid programs a safe space to share

In the last 24 years, Catherine “Cathy” Muszynski has experienced tremendous loss, a life-changing diagnosis, and made lifelong friendships along the way, all of which was made easier through Wellness House.

Cathy first turned to Wellness House in 1998, when her first husband was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Cathy drew support from Wellness House during her husband’s illness and after his death. Based on her positive experience, she continued to support the work of Wellness House, all the while enjoying the company of friends she made while attending the facility’s programs and support groups.

It wasn’t until 2019 that she returned, this time as a patient herself.

“I knew where I wanted to go,” Cathy, 72, said of learning that she had glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. She attends a Monthly Diagnosis-Specific Peer Connections group for people diagnosed with brain tumors as well as their loved ones and caregivers. Cathy also attends a weekly General Cancer Support Group. Beyond her support groups, Cathy takes part in Thursday morning Guided Meditation through Wellness House.

“I do them all at home,” Cathy said, an experience that’s made easier and more enjoyable thanks to a grant received by Wellness House from Service Club of Chicago.

Grant money was used to purchase and install Bose video bars that allow for seamless streaming of Wellness House programming to participants, wherever they may be.

“It’s remarkable equipment that has helped us provide hybrid services,” said Wellness House Director of Programs Maigenete Mengesha. Maigenete said Wellness House participants choose to participate from home for a

variety of reasons, including limitations caused by cancer diagnosis and treatments, distance and the need to protect themselves from COVID-19 and other infections. We now offer programming in three modalities; in-person, online, and hybrid. No matter the reason, Wellness House uses the devices to bring support groups, exercise classes, nutrition and cooking demonstrations and even counseling into the homes of cancer patients and their loved ones.

While Cathy attends her support groups, husband Homer often participates in a caregiver support group from another part of their home.

“It’s a very, very safe place for me to be,” he said, and a rare opportunity to be completely candid about how Cathy’s illness affects him. At the weekly caregivers

support group, Homer can openly share his worries, concerns, frustrations and feelings without fear of being judged or thought of as selfish.

“I find complete acceptance in that group,” he said.

Having learned the basics of meditation through Wellness House, Cathy can now practice the techniques on her own. She said meditation helps to still her mind and calm the frustrations that come from dealing with the physical effects of her cancer.

“Numbers have always been part of my life,” said Cathy, a retired certified public accountant. Since her treatment, numbers and letters become scrambled, making reading, speaking and anything involving numbers more difficult.

“I get frustrated sometimes when I can’t find the word or the letter or the number,” she said. Wellness House provides Cathy with a safe place to voice those frustrations.

“I can vent,” she said.

Sometimes, Cathy chooses to sit in a support group and say nothing at all. That’s ok, too.

“I can be still and quiet, or I can talk,” Cathy said. “I don’t know of any other place like Wellness House.”

PROGRAM EVENTS

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

Kids Kamp

There was plenty of fun at the annual Kids Kamp in July. Kids enjoyed making arts and crafts, playing games, met therapy dogs, stress management through karate, decorated and flew kites and most of all, had fun just being kids. Cancer has impacted all of these kids in various ways, but this week was just about having a good time and making new friends.



The Hope Social

Wellness House celebrated the power of community with food, activities, music, and time together at our first Hope Social event in June. This outdoor event provided an opportunity for the Wellness House community to

gather and share together. 170 participants attended and enjoyed food from Chipotle and an Original Rainbow Cone food truck, while connecting with one another and staff.

A huge thank you to all staff and volunteers who helped make this event happen.



Support Groups and Counseling

Peer support and counseling during cancer can provide a sense of community to share experiences and strategies to cope. Wellness House offers a variety of support programs for diagnosed individuals and caregivers. Did you know that participants can choose from over 14 diagnosis-specific, caregiver, bereavement, and survivorship groups either in-person, online, or the new hybrid format? (see participant story on page 4) We offer nearly 50 different group programs monthly. **Research shows better outcomes for those who feel a sense of community and support as they go through cancer.**

"I hear so often from participants that talking with others who truly understand what they are going through makes everything feel more bearable. There is this safe place to share how they are really feeling, a sense of acceptance and understanding, plus great ideas to manage specific challenges along the way."

Jill Otto – Support Groups and Counseling, Senior Program Manager



Inspiring and Empowering Strength in Families



- Allison Wenclawski
Oncology Support Counselor

“A lot of people feel really lost and alone in this journey. I’m proud to make that journey just a little easier.”

Allison Wenclawski

Meet Our Experts — Allison Wenclawski

Oncology Support Counselor

Oncology Support Counselor Allison Wenclawski was working toward her master’s degree in social work when she found the specialty that would shape her career and eventually, guide her to Wellness House.

As a clinical intern, Allison worked with children and teens being treated for cancer.

“That really opened my eyes to the realm of oncology,” she said, and the role she could play in making someone’s toughest journey a little easier. “I found that I really had a passion for supporting those patients and their families.”

Allison said her job at Wellness House allows her to provide comfort and support while developing relationships with patients over a longer period of time than was possible in a hospital setting.

“I love the connection that we are able to form with participants,” she said.

And while her job is to provide support for patients and families, Allison said she often is the one left inspired and empowered by the strength of her program participants.

Allison said she knew of Wellness House before joining the staff in 2022, often referring patients to the services available. But it wasn’t until she became part of the Wellness House team that she fully understood the breadth and importance of its work.

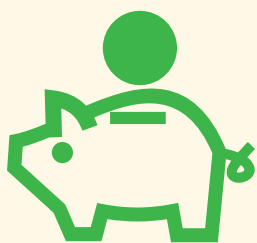
“My eyes have been opened to all of the wonderful programs,” she said.

Allison facilitates four to six groups a week while also offering individual counseling to patients and their loved ones. Groups include diagnosis-specific groups, a general group, and one that explores the spiritual side of participants’ journeys through cancer.

She also spreads the word about the services available at Wellness House during visits to doctor’s offices and care facilities throughout the community.

Allison’s Professional Highlights

- Holds a bachelor of science degree in psychology from the University of Illinois
- Earned a master’s degree in social work from the University of Chicago
- Worked as a pediatric oncology social worker at Loyola Medicine
- Taught English in Buenos Aires, Argentina



Unique Ways to Give

Have you noticed the pink pumpkins on display at Wellness House each October? They are generously donated by Rudie Johansson, a breast cancer survivor who has planned a bike ride



fundraiser for Wellness House each year since 2016. Rudie and her friends and family support Wellness House with a bike ride and silent auction in and around Elmhurst, IL in appreciation for all we do for those affected by cancer.

This year's bike ride for breast cancer kicks off at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 8 in Elmhurst at the Spring Inn. Cyclists will travel through five separate stops throughout the local suburbs and the event concludes with a fun celebration and raffle draw back at the Spring Inn.

Thanks, Rudie and friends!

3 Simple Steps to Make Charitable Gifting Part of Your Estate Plan



David Blaydes and his team may be reached at info@rpiplan.com or 630.778.8100 x100. www.rpiplan.com

Making a plan for your finances when you are no longer here can be extremely meaningful and gratifying. It's something that often falls by the wayside because you have a hard time figuring out where to start, but the reality of it is that it doesn't need to be overcomplicated.

Through estate planning you can dictate who will inherit your assets and who can make medical and financial decisions on your behalf. If you're not sure what you want to do with the money you've earned and saved up, think about what you want to leave behind as your legacy.

When your answer is helping and serving others, then include charitable gifting through estate planning. Here are 3 simple strategies that work well in any market environment:

1. Gift Appreciated Stock – stock prices are down this year which provides you with an opportunity as long as you act before the market bounces back. Even though you may have seen a decrease in value this year, there's a good chance you still hold stock that has grown in value by a substantial amount. You can avoid paying any capital gains tax on your holdings if you gift them to a non-for-profit

organization. The charity can then hold the stock and sell it after the market rebounds, thereby potentially increasing the dollar amount. In short, the Bear Market provides an opportunity to take these short-term lemons and make them into long-term gifting lemonade.

2. Leave Money to a Charity in Your Will – a will specifies what you want to be done with your assets after your death. You can use a will to designate a charitable bequest. It's simple to create and can lower the amount of your taxable estate and any estate taxes.

3. Gift Your Property – Not all charitable gifting needs to be in cash. Real estate can be a great way to incorporate charitable gifting into your estate plan. For example, if you own a vacation home, farm, or ranch, you can gift it to charity while reserving lifetime use. That way you can continue to use the property for the rest of your life.

These easy to implement strategies can help you make a lasting impact that allows you to cement your legacy today and for years to come. We are happy to brainstorm this with you to help you determine what works the best for you.

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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
Development@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:

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