



A Family of Teams *page 4*

Wellness News

## Dear Friends,

We know that a common experience people face after a cancer diagnosis is coming to terms with the fact that the cancer journey can oftentimes feel isolating and lonely. That's why at Wellness House we have spent the last 34 years building a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for participants, and their families, with oncology experts who understand their cancer diagnosis, and programs where they can share their experiences with others who are going through the same thing.

Cultivating a sense of community and belonging is an important cornerstone of the Wellness House experience. The sense of being connected to others during a difficult time can bring strength and hope, which is why we continue to expand our Wellness House community to more who are in need. We are proud to offer support groups, nutrition, exercise, and stress management programs at UI Health Mile Square, RUSH Medical Center, Loyola Medicine, and other satellite locations in the greater Chicagoland area, bringing us closer to our vision that all people impacted by cancer thrive.

In this newsletter, we meet Janet, who was diagnosed with terminal neuroendocrine cancer 13 years ago. Janet found community at Wellness House through our support groups and counseling programs, and continues to be part of the Wellness House community through our annual Walk for Wellness House. Having served as a walk Team Captain, Janet and her team have raised over \$10,000 for Wellness House. Asked why she walks for Wellness House she replied: "Participating in the support groups has meant so much to me and my family. The information I've learned has been invaluable and has taught me so much about the latest research and how to better understand my diagnosis. I walk for myself, for my family, and for other support group members who became my friends, and who have passed."

We are constantly innovating and learning from our participants and their needs and are also grateful for our partners and sponsors who continue to support and help us grow our community. We thank you for your continued support of our mission and hope you will walk with us on Sunday, May 5 at 8:00 am.

I enjoy hearing from you so please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at [lkolavennu@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:lkolavennu@wellnesshouse.org) with any questions, feedback, or ideas you may have about how we can work together to advance cancer wellness.

Sincerely,



**Lisa K. Kolavennu, MA, LCPC**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Monte Henige**  
Board Chair

## 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.

### Walk for Wellness House Volunteers!

We have opportunities to get involved with our upcoming Walk for Wellness House. Help out before the event, or on the big day itself—Sunday, May 5th!



SCAN ME

Interested in volunteering for the Walk for the **first time**? Please scan the QR code to view the Walk for Wellness House Volunteer Application and sign-up:

**Have you volunteered with us before?** Great! Then you are already in our volunteer database and do not need to submit an additional volunteer application!

Please contact [volunteeradmin@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:volunteeradmin@wellnesshouse.org) to let us know that you are interested in a volunteer assignment during the Walk for Wellness House. We will get you signed up and provide more information.

### Front Desk Volunteers:

We are always looking for individuals who are interested in providing exceptional customer service by being warm, welcoming, and relationship-focused to all of our participants, staff, and the Wellness House community. Please reach out if you are interested in greeting and assisting participants and visitors when they enter the house and programs.

Shifts to volunteer weekly/bi-weekly at the front desk are as follows:

**Mondays – Thursdays:** 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm, 4:00 pm - 7:30 pm  
**Fridays:** 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
**Saturdays:** 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

### Wellness House Ambassador

Promote awareness of Wellness House/The Courtyard and help achieve revenue and participation goals. As a Wellness House Ambassador, you are an extension of staff and an integral part of the Wellness House community.

### Program 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.

If you are interested in signing up for any of these volunteer opportunities or would like to learn more, please fill out our volunteer application at [wellnesshouse.org/volunteer](https://wellnesshouse.org/volunteer) or scan the QR code.



## Radiance Ball a Shining Success

Over 500 guests attended the annual Wellness House Ball on **Saturday, October 21, 2023**. Radiance Ball guests dined, danced, and donated to advance cancer wellness at the gorgeous Geraghty Chicago. The ambiance mirrored the warm and inviting feeling of Wellness House with exquisite golden light fixtures and a palette of brnished yellows and soft browns.



Wellness House thanks the generous attendees and sponsors who contributed to the evening's success, breaking all previous event fundraising records. Proceeds from the Radiance Ball will help make more than 500 programs a month possible for individuals and families navigating the hardships of cancer. A special thank you to Presenting Sponsor Burke Beverage for their continued support and generosity.

**Co-Chairs Meaghan Daly and Briana Murray** kicked off the evening and shared their personal connection to the mission of Wellness House. Dinner was followed by an action-packed live auction and paddle raise, along with a touching video that told the story of how a breast cancer survivor, her husband, and daughter found strength and hope through individual and family counseling at Wellness House. The evening was capped off with a lively performance by local band favorite Déjà Vu.

**Save the date for Saturday, October 19, 2024, for our next fabulous ball taking place at The Old Post Office in Chicago.** 2024 Ball Co-chairs Pamela and George Pontikis and Katie and Michael Isadore are already busy at work creating a night to remember. For more information about 2024 sponsorships and tickets, email Annie Hart at [ahart@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:ahart@wellnesshouse.org).



Rush Medical Center



Loyola's Cardinal Bernardin Cancer

## WELLNESS HOUSE ADDS TWO NEW CHICAGO PARTNER LOCATIONS

Free cancer support became more accessible with the launch of two new partner locations at **Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, and Loyola's Cardinal Bernardin Cancer Center in Maywood.**

Programming at the Rush University Medical Center location include Support Groups for Breast Cancer, Prostate Cancer, Head and Neck Cancer and a Spanish Speaking Group Series. This location also presents special programs such as a five-week ReRouting Survivorship Workshop Series that includes information on survivorship topics such as physical and emotional health, nutrition, and medical care. At Loyola's Cardinal Bernardin Cancer Center, patients can experience Chair Yoga, and Snack and Learn where nutrition is not only taught but tasted in a fun and interactive class.

## POLAR EXPRESS ARRIVES AT WELLNESS HOUSE

Over 100 kids and their parents attended Wellness House's 2023 Polar Express Winter Wonderland and experienced a magical evening. Families were



treated to a hot chocolate bar, snacks, games, crafts, The Polar Express movie with popcorn and a visit with Santa who made his annual arrival on a Hinsdale Fire Truck. Smiles were plentiful as the Hinsdale Fire Department (Santa's Elves) called out the names of each child as Santa gave a hand-picked gift for each as they came forward.



## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

The emotional and physical toll of cancer can sometimes take over everyday life for couples but one night a year, Wellness House transforms into a much-needed relaxing evening out. **Over 40 participants attended Some Enchanted Evening which provided the opportunity to connect with a special loved one**, as well as the Wellness House community, over a delicious meal with mocktails and entertainment. Volunteers from our board of directors, along with our staff served the meal and offered hospitality to our guests. All of this happened in the lovely setting of Wellness House program spaces, transformed to feel like a cozy restaurant.



# A Family of Teams



Every May a few thousand people turn out to walk the streets of Hinsdale in the annual Walk for Wellness House. Among the crowd are families, old friends of those who have benefited from Wellness House, groups of people united by their own cancer experiences, groups that share a place of work or local church, and those who simply care.

“Both Corporate and Friends and Family teams are an integral part of the Walk for Wellness House,” said Annie Hart, Manager of Special Events and Annual Giving at Wellness House.

Teams range in size from solo walkers to more than 100. Some contribute what they can from their own pockets, while others embark on fundraising efforts that result in thousands of dollars for Wellness House. Every team, every walker and every dollar, Hart said,

is key to the continued success of the annual event, and to Wellness House. Walk for Wellness House funds provide Wellness House with about 17% of its budget every year.

At the core of each team is the captain - the person charged with organizing the team’s walkers and rallying the team before the Walk. Ernie Turcotte is captain of one of the walk’s largest and most financially prolific teams - THECROWNROYALSTEAM. Started nearly a decade ago by five men as a tribute to a friend with a

fondness for “the whiskey in the purple bag”, THECROWNROYALSTEAM now numbers more than 100 team members each year. Among the walkers are family members from across the country and new friends, too. In recent years members of Wellness House’s Prostate Network Groups and the Tuesday and Wednesday Cancer Groups have joined the purple-shirted brigade.

Turcotte said he needs no reminder that there is no “I” in “team.” Every member, he said, is equally important to the power of THECROWNROYALSTEAM.

Wellness Warriors is a team for walkers without a team and looking to join an existing group. Anyone who wishes to walk but doesn’t belong to a team is invited to join the Wellness Warriors. But Hart wants potential walkers to know just how easy it is to form a team of their own.

“Teams come in every size. One or two people could be a team,” she said. As a team, walkers can earn recognition and incentives that are different from individual fundraising incentives. Team members also benefit from the fun, camaraderie, and empowerment that comes from choosing a creative team name, designing a team t-shirt



(if they choose to do so), and joining together for a common cause.

Team captain Deborah Robertson said the money raised is vital to the continued success of Wellness House, but every walker also provides something that can’t be logged in a bank account. She likened the support she felt from fellow walkers at last year’s event to “an out-of-body experience.” Knowing every walker is there for her and for every person experiencing cancer creates a feeling of support that no amount of money can buy.

Marci Goldberg, cancer survivor, team captain and Wellness House’s Participant Engagement Manager, said being part of a Walk for Wellness team accomplishes Wellness House’s ultimate goal - to help people with cancer and who are touched by cancer to not only live, but thrive.

“I like seeing the energy of everyone coming together and working together for a common cause—for Wellness House,” Goldberg said.

Visit [wellnesshouse.org/walk](https://wellnesshouse.org/walk) today to create your own team, join another team or sign up as an individual.



## Deborah Robertson

Deborah Robertson’s role as team captain of **Deb’s Dazzle Attack** comes naturally.

“I think I’ve played the role of leader my whole life,” said Deborah, whose team last year numbered more than 50. As a program participant, Deborah knows firsthand the good that comes from Wellness House. For her, walking is as much about spreading the word as it is about raising money.

“I really want to get the word out about Wellness House and how it supports everyone,” including patients, families and even friends, Deborah said.



## Janet Medhat

As someone with terminal neuroendocrine cancer/tumor, Janet Medhat benefits directly from the services of Wellness House. But she’s not walking just for herself.

“I walk because Wellness House has meant so much to me for 13 years now, and it is important for me to make sure these doors stay open for others,” said Janet, captain of **Heard of Zebras**.

Last year Heard of Zebras raised \$10,000 to support Wellness House, its programming, and the people who turn to Wellness House for support. Every step raises money, but Janet said her participation also is a tribute to those fighting cancer and those whose fight has ended.



## Lori Naccarato

Lori Naccarato serves Wellness House both as a member of the board of directors and as captain of **Marv-elous-2**, a team formed in honor of her father and the father of a friend.

But Marv-elous-2 is more than a tribute to two beloved dads. Lori said her participation in the walk is a display of gratitude for the support Wellness House provided her family during both her parents’ battles with cancer.

“Wellness House has helped me become a better person, and to realize how blessed I am to have the people in my life who have been affected by cancer. I’m so grateful for Wellness House and everything it has done for my family and those affected by cancer,” Lori said.



## Marci Goldberg

Marci Goldberg’s reasons for walking in the Walk for Wellness House are a little different this year.

“I walk for all of our team members, but particularly Pearl. She was one of our support group members who died last year, about a week before the Walk,” said Marci, team captain for **Team F U**.

As Participant Engagement Manager at Wellness House and someone who faced her own cancer diagnosis with the help of Wellness House, Marci clearly sees the many ways that Wellness House helps patients, families and loved ones living with cancer. No one knows when a diagnosis will happen or its outcome, Marci said, but walking is just one more way she can help ensure that Wellness House will be there for anyone who needs it.



## Ernie Turcotte

Proudly clad in their signature purple shirts, **THECROWNROYALSTEAM** is one that can’t be missed. Having grown from just five members, the team will number more than 100 as it sets off on its ninth Walk for Wellness House this year, according to Team Captain and Wellness House participant Ernie Turcotte. Ernie said family and supporters come from all over the country to walk the streets of Hinsdale in support of Wellness House.

As large as the group itself is Ernie’s enthusiasm for Wellness House and the annual walk. He refers to the thousands who will walk in this year’s event as “the family of teams. It’s a family he is proud to be part of.



## Jeri Lau

Jeri has been on staff as an Oncology Exercise Specialist for over 18 years and also at each Walk. Jeri feels the participants in her classes are like an extended family. “We all truly care about each other. I walk to help ensure all programs continue to grow and thrive. I love being the captain of the **Wellness Warriors** to encourage participants to be a part of the Walk. Some might be a little hesitant to not want to walk or join as an individual thinking that means they are walking alone. “Join our team,” I’d say “Be a part of this very special day,” says Jeri. The Wellness Warriors Team has typically been the participants in the exercise program, so they know each other, although it is open to anyone.



Emily Guzman, MS, RD, LDN

## Meet Our Experts

### Emily Guzman, MS, RD, LDN

Community Oncology Dietitian

When Emily was just five her father was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. Emily didn't know it at the time, but her father's diagnosis would lead her down a path to where she is today at Wellness House. Throughout her childhood, nutrition became a focus due to her dad's illness as her mom was focused on healthy eating after his cancer diagnosis.

Emily went to college and received a bachelor's degree in English but during the time when her dad was undergoing a kidney transplant, she learned that nutrition could be a career choice. After her father's passing, she went back to school to become a dietitian. "I realized how important nutrition was for him after his diagnosis and the side effects he experienced during his cancer. I knew I wanted to go to graduate school to become an oncology dietitian. After work experiences in a hospital setting, I found Wellness House and realized community health was what I wanted to do," said Emily.

Emily came to Wellness House in June 2023 and has enjoyed helping people navigate side-effects, teaching people about cancer-fighting foods, and holding cooking demonstrations and hands-on cooking classes. "I love the culinary aspect of nutrition and with my oncology dietitian knowledge, this was a great fit for me. The most meaningful thing about my job is teaching side-effect management classes to help with fatigue, and things such as low blood count or GI issues. What I find is people really respond to understanding the "why" behind what is happening. A lot of people say

they have not been given the time and space to get a good understanding of their diagnosis. When people come to classes, I explain why there is fatigue, why cancer is doing this to your body, and more. Even before we get to side-effects, just understanding the why is very impactful for them. Participants can gain knowledge not only in nutrition but also the



additional 5 other program areas at Wellness House," said Emily.

Emily explains that a lot of people

have anxiety about food or ingredients during cancer, but it is most important to think of how you eat over time. We go to chemotherapy and have medications and treatments, but preparing meals and nutrition for our bodies is part of treatment, too. People going through cancer need nourishment to keep their body strong and help it heal.

#### Emily's Professional Highlights

- Holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Kalamazoo College and a Master of Science in Nutrition from the University of Illinois in Chicago
- Registered dietitian and Member of the Academy of Nutrition

"The most meaningful thing about my job is teaching side effect management classes to help with fatigue, and things such as low blood count or GI issues."

Emily Guzman

## Unique Ways to Give

Set it and forget it. That works for clocks, Crock pots, and donations to Wellness House.

Monthly donations are an easy way to contribute to Wellness House—and you'll never have to wonder whether you made your gift or not. Indeed, monthly gifts of \$10, \$25, \$50 or more add up, and, over a year, make a difference in people's lives:

- \$10 per month pays for at least one Chair Yoga class
- \$25 per month covers the cost of one child attending Kids Kamp
- \$50 per month supports several hands-on cooking classes
- \$100 per month pays for four weekly support group sessions

Better yet, select an amount that matters to you. Donor Molly contributes a monthly

amount tied to the date her sister-in-law passed away from breast cancer; supporter Carol contributes the equivalent of five coffee shop purchases each month, and David just divided his typical annual gift by 12.

In addition to charging a monthly gift to your credit card, recurring gifts may be set up as automatic transfers from your bank account. This safe, secure, and easy option saves administrative and processing costs (no need to follow up when your credit card's expiration date changes) and directs more of your generous gift to Wellness House programming.

Pay it forward with monthly giving in honor of everyone fighting cancer. With your support, Wellness House will be at their side.

Set up your monthly gift today at [wellnesshouse.org/donate](https://wellnesshouse.org/donate), or by calling us at 630-654-5104. Have questions? Email us at [development@wellnesshouse.org](mailto:development@wellnesshouse.org)



#### Hinsdale Police Department

Wellness House is so proud to be the Hinsdale Fire Department "No Shave" November fundraiser during December and January. The officers voted on WH to receive the donation this year. They are happy to support Wellness House because of its strong community support.



"Congratulations to the highest fundraiser, Officer Jeff Huckfeldt (left), and many thanks to Hinsdale Chief of Police, Brian King."



## Wellness House Celebrates Beloved Courtyard Merchandisers

A priceless trio of volunteers retires after 32 years of service

Over 90 family, friends and staff from The Courtyard came together in December to celebrate Nancy Keenan, Sheila Botti and Kathy Ryan, known as "The Merchandisers," at The Courtyard in downtown Hinsdale. The Courtyard is a mighty little resale shop that started in 1991 in an alley beside Hinsdale Bank and still stands strong today. Anyone who has walked through the doors knows there is an endless rotation of unique décor and furnishings where you can find anything from a one-of-a-kind antique inlaid box to high quality gently used sofa for a bargain, or just the right cocktail table. What shoppers throughout the past 32 years know most of all are the long-time merchandisers Nancy Keenan, Sheila Botti, and Kathy Ryan, who have made a difference to cancer patients and families through an abundance of talents, and countless hours of time that have created a thriving consignment shop.

The Courtyard donates 100% of its proceeds to Wellness House through the incredible persistence and long-time dedication of this trio of Courtyard merchandisers. They've created a unique and robust volunteer culture where lifelong friendships develop and a spirit of giving that inspires all who work with them. Through their steadfast and unwavering leadership, The Courtyard is as successful as it is today with an ongoing, dedicated group of over 40 volunteers, and more than 5 million dollars contributed to Wellness House.

This amazing trio remained wholeheartedly committed year after year and Wellness House was lucky to benefit from their unparalleled hard work and longevity. They left a well thought out plan of succession to ensure that The Courtyard would continue to be the same eclectic and unique experience and remain on a path for continued success for years to come.

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



## Giftng Appreciated Securities

David Blaydes and his team may be reached at [info@rpiplan.com](mailto:info@rpiplan.com)  
or 630.778.8100 x100. [www.rpiplan.com](http://www.rpiplan.com)

Giftng securities that have appreciated in value can offer several benefits for you. We have seen this opportunity become more attractive recently due to positive stock performance. Let's review several benefits of you giftng securities with gains:

**Avoidance of Capital Gains Taxes:** Any time you can make an impact and reduce your taxes, you should consider it. When you sell appreciated securities, you typically incur capital gains tax on the gain. However, by donating the securities directly to a qualified charity, such as Wellness House, you can avoid capital gains taxes altogether. This means you don't pay a dime to the IRS on the gains and the full value of the securities is directed towards the charity.

**Income Tax Deduction:** In addition to avoiding capital gains taxes, you may also be eligible for an income tax deduction on the fair market value of your securities at the time of the donation. This can reduce your taxable income in the year of the gift.

**Questions?** Please email David at [davidb@rpiplan.com](mailto:davidb@rpiplan.com) or call him at 630-778-8100 x100.

Securities offered through Securities America, Inc., member FINRA/SIPC. Advisory services offered through Securities America Advisors. The Investment Fiduciary standard of care applies to advisory services only. Securities America, Inc. and Securities America Advisors, Inc. do not provide tax or legal advice.

**Maximizing Impact:** By donating investments with substantial gains, you can make a more significant charitable contribution without impacting your cash flow or other financial resources.

**Simplicity and Convenience:** Donating appreciated securities can be a straightforward and convenient process. Many brokerage firms offer direct transfer services, allowing you to transfer securities directly to the charity's account, streamlining your donation process.

Overall, giftng appreciated securities is a tax-efficient strategy for charitable giving that allows you to leverage your investment gains to support charitable causes while reducing your taxes. It's a win-win. Work with your trusted advisor, CPA and/or attorney to better understand how you can make the most of your charitable goals. We are also available to help you.

### Thank you to our generous grantors:

Anonymous  
Guy A. and N. Kay Arboit Charitable Trust  
Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund  
Bears Care  
CBOT Foundation  
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**The Courtyar**  
You'll treasure the experience.

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

#thecourtyardhinsdale

[ShopTheCourtyard.com](http://ShopTheCourtyard.com)

for weekly "featured items" as a preview of the treasures you'll find there.

**Hours:** Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For more information: Call 630.323.1135

The Courtyard | 63 Village Place | Hinsdale, IL 60521