

GILDA GRAM

A free, non-profit support community for anyone touched by cancer.

Stressing the importance of communication when cancer is diagnosed.

When cancer is discovered, it not only affects the person who has been diagnosed, but also those close to that person, particularly a spouse or partner, who may experience fear, anger and frustration. Communication between the partners can often slow down or even cease.

Gilda's Club WNY recently started a couples networking group, which meets the first Thursday of each month from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at the clubhouse. It's for any couple - spouses or partners - where at least one has been diagnosed with cancer. Both must be Gilda's Club members.

"Issues started coming up in our friends & family group that made us realize there is a need for a couples group," says Mary Nixon, facilitator of that group and co-facilitator of the couples group with Judy Dixon. "It's not meant to be a marriage counseling group, but more of an educational support group that will evolve as the group decides what it needs and wants from the experience."

Nixon says spouses or partners typically try to protect each other from the cancer experience and often stop communicating at a time when communication between them is vital. But a cancer diagnosis means life changes for both parties, as well as the possibility of dealing with long-term illness or even death. "I've been very inspired to see how people become stronger through group participation," says Nixon. "At Gilda's Club you do see tears and sadness, but - for the most part - it is a very upbeat and positive place where our members learn a lot from each other."

To learn more about the couples networking group, contact Susan Lichtblau at 332.5900, ext. 201.



Mary Nixon (left) and Judy Dixon, both seasoned Gilda's Club volunteer facilitators and licensed clinical social workers, are co-facilitating our new couples group.



Annual gingerbread event raises funds for Gilda's Club.

We'd like to thank all those who helped make this year's Gingerbread... Gifts...Glitz...at Gilda's Club fundraising event such a great success (and a whole lot of fun!). Special thanks to Terri Campbell, Anne Magnini and the gingerbread committee, to Anne Bliss, Mary Czajkowski and all the artists who participated and donated, to all those who entered gingerbread houses, the judges and those who bid on the houses, the countless others who donated time, money and energy to make this event run so smoothly and especially to all of those who attended the event. We'll have more on the gingerbread event - including pictures and the gingerbread house contest winners - in our next issue.

A unique gift suggestion.

Honor and memorial gifts are a wonderful way to express your regard for special friends and relatives during the holiday season and throughout the year for such occasions as birthdays, weddings, Mother's Day, Father's Day and more. Your gift, which will benefit Gilda's Club WNY, can be acknowledged to the honoree or another person upon request. The donor envelope included with this newsletter contains a section for these gifts. Or, for more information, please contact Robin Vail at 716.332.5900, ext. 207.

The clubhouse was lit up like a Halloween pumpkin on October 30 as our member families once again put on their best costumes for our fourth annual Noogiefest! All four floors featured activities and entertainment for kids of all ages (and the food was frightfully delicious!).



Above Left: Jacob (left) proved to be a very sea-worthy pirate and Emma a very cheerful cheerleader!



Above Right: All of our members are superheroes! But, for Noogiefest, Dorothy and her son, Ty, came dressed the part: Dorothy as Super Girl and Ty as a very muscular Hulk.



Right: Adults can enjoy Halloween, too, as demonstrated by Mickey (the flapper), Sharon (the candy corn) and Neil (the clown), who kindly posed in the reception area.

Photos: Michael Mandolfo

Have a creative idea to raise funds and friends for Gilda's Club?

Even before we opened our signature red door four years ago, Western New Yorkers interested in helping Gilda's Club were stepping forward with fundraising ideas. These third-party events are always appreciated and typically bring new friends to Gilda's Club as well.

Some of the ideas have included the Dessert, Revel & Chocolate Extravaganza hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst; Ready, Set, Wax at The Village Spa in Williamsville; the Pajama Jam Dance organized by the North Collins Central School Chorus and a split club raffle held by the UAW Local 424.

Here's how third-party events work: the organization or group completes the Third Party Fundraiser form (available through Robin Vail or at www.gildasclubwny.org) and presents its idea to Gilda's Club. Once we review and approve the event, the third-party group plans, organizes and hosts the event on its own; Gilda's Club's involvement is limited, other than to approve any materials being produced, such as flyers, press releases, ads, etc.

"Third-party events are a great way for students to earn their community service credits or for service groups to help out an organization such as Gilda's Club, which touches many Western New Yorkers," says Robin Vail, development coordinator for Gilda's Club WNY. "These events have generated much-needed donations as well as visibility, and we're grateful to those who show their support in this way."

For more information on third party events, call Robin Vail, 332.5900, ext. 207.

Where would you be without Gilda's Club?

"I'd be dead," responded one of our members.

When he was diagnosed with cancer, the medical community provided little hope. He chose to deal with his illness in a holistic way – medically, of course, but also emotionally and spiritually.

"You have to do a lot of work yourself," he said, "and Gilda's Club helps you do that."

Gilda's Club helps people live with cancer – at no financial cost to them. We don't want there to be any financial barriers to being involved in our cancer support community, whatever a family's financial situation.

In these tough economic times, some people will lose their insurance. Others will lose their jobs. Unfortunately, cancer won't take a holiday during this economic downturn.

Three out of four families will still care for someone with cancer. That is why Gilda's Club needs to be available for everyone living with cancer – men, women, teens and children – along with their families and friends.

Thank you for your advocacy and support of Gilda's Club WNY.



Mary Beth Karr

Mary Beth Karr, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Please consider making a year-end gift to Gilda's Club. Contact Robin Vail in our Development Office at 716.332.5900, ext. 207.

Learning firsthand how Gilda's Club helps.

Park Country Club provided the perfect backdrop in October for the third annual *Beyond the Red Door Fundraising Breakfast*, where Gilda's Club members shared their compelling stories of how the organization has helped them through their cancer experience.

"The breakfast is a great way to personally connect with our donors and let them see, firsthand, the incredible impact Gilda's Club has on those living with cancer," says Robin Vail, development coordinator. "Our members' stories inspire both current and potential donors to donate to this special cause."

Gilda's Club wishes to thank Sorrento Lactalis Commercial who, for the second year in a row, donated \$50,000 toward the breakfast.

For more information about the Beyond the Red Door Fundraising Breakfast, contact Robin Vail at 332.5900, ext. 207.

Sorrento
CHEESE



Volunteers Paul Hoebel and Michelle Giancaterin find that teamwork makes the job much more fun as they send out the monthly volunteer newsletter.

"The 'City of Good Neighbors' is alive and well at Gilda's Club!"

Paul Hoebel learned about Gilda's Club from a friend who volunteers at the clubhouse. When he asked her about it, she said she thought Paul would enjoy it. That was a year ago. These days, Paul – who's retired and lives in the city – puts in an average of five hours a week volunteering. He works at the reception desk answering phones and greeting visitors. He's helped send out mailings and he's pitched in during potluck dinners and other events as needed, including playing Santa at this summer's inaugural Camp Sparkle.

"I really enjoy helping out such a great organization," says Paul. "The staff members are just wonderful, and they make it so easy to volunteer."

When Paul started at Gilda's Club, he knew very little about the organization. He said he's amazed at how much they offer and how much help they provide. "I didn't realize how many people Gilda's Club touches and how they really reach out to people involved with cancer. I'm amazed at how fast it's growing!"

Paul says Gilda's Club is a great place to share the cancer experience with others who are also going through it. "Gilda's Club gives you a place to talk to people on the same level and to learn a lot. But most of all, it's a very happy place where you know you're not alone. It's clear all the members who come here want to be here, look forward to being here. I enjoy being a part of that by helping out any way I can."

For more information on volunteering at Gilda's Club, call Susan Lichtblau, 332.5900, ext. 201.

Welcome our new coordinator of volunteers

We'd like you to meet our newest staff member, Heidi Billittier, who joined Gilda's Club in October as our part-time coordinator of volunteers.

In her new role, Heidi will schedule volunteers for reception, events and other duties, participate in the volunteer orientation process, produce the volunteer newsletter and generally just be the "go-to" person for our more than 200 active volunteers.

"I'm very excited to be part of Gilda's Club," says Heidi. "I am enjoying getting to know the members and volunteers, and am very impressed with the camaraderie among the staff. The atmosphere at Gilda's Club is warm and welcoming and I am thrilled about this exciting new experience."

Before coming to Gilda's Club, Heidi worked at the Lutheran Church Home, an adult care facility in the city of Buffalo. A graduate of UB, she received Bachelor's degrees in social gerontology and communication.

A former professional dancer, Heidi currently appears, nationwide, on PBS television's "Body Electric." She lives in the Parkside area of the city with her husband, Frank, and daughters Sarah and Julia.

If you see Heidi in the clubhouse, be sure to say hello!



Volunteer Nancy Mallon (left) and Heidi Billittier, our new coordinator of volunteers, show off their warm and welcoming smiles at the clubhouse.

Congratulations NFADA!

Gilda's Club is proud to recognize the Niagara Frontier Auto Dealers Association (NFADA) Charitable Foundation, honored in November by the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Western New York Chapter as "Outstanding Philanthropic Foundation."

"We nominated the Foundation for this award not only for all of its philanthropic efforts on behalf of Gilda's Club," says Mary Beth Karr, executive director. "We also thought it should be recognized for the work it has done on behalf of thousands of Western New York children and families by raising and donating nearly half a million dollars and by lending its reputation, relationships and employees to help enhance so many lives in our area."

National Philanthropy Day recognizes the great contributions of philanthropy – and those people active in the philanthropic community – to the enrichment of our world. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of giving and all it has made possible.



Five things you'll find on our website

Our website is full of helpful information for anyone who has been touched by cancer. We're constantly updating the site to provide important information for members, volunteers, donors, friends and family members.

Look at what's up there now:

- The answers to frequently-asked questions about Gilda's Club
- Online donation capabilities
- Information on becoming a member (membership is FREE!)
- Our current program calendar
- How to volunteer at Gilda's Club

Visit our website at www.gildasclubwny.org.



GildaGram is published regularly for donors and friends of Gilda's Club Western New York. Please share this newsletter with a friend. If you would like additional copies, please email gildas@gildasclubwny.org

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For more information on Gilda's Club Worldwide, or to locate other Gilda's clubhouses, go to www.gildasclub.org

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