

Gildagram



For Friends of Gilda's Club Chicago • Winter 2001

Living with cancer?
Come as you are."

A Message From The President—

The beginning of the year is a time to take stock, make resolutions, and hope for the best. This past year has been a good one for our club. We have over 1,300 members who have embraced the Gilda's Club model. We have a diverse membership reflective of our community. We have an extraordinary Board of corporate and community leaders, who with our Honorary and Medical Advisory Boards, who further our mission. We enjoy the continued support of individuals, corporations and foundations whose generosity keeps our red door open.

It is also a time to make resolutions, and we have two. First, we resolve to hold a great event at The Cadillac Palace Theatre on February 13. The fundraiser is the benefit world premiere performance of **THE PRODUCERS**, the new Mel Brooks musical starring Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick. Benefit tickets are available for \$200 and show tickets for \$50.

Our second resolution is to continue to provide a warm and welcoming meeting place where people living with cancer, their families and friends, join together to build the social and emotional support **that we know** are as essential as medical care. We do that through the involvement of every person reading this newsletter, and we welcome your suggestions on making our organization the best that it can be.

It will be three years ago this February that Gilda's Club Chicago opened. As we hope for the best in the coming months, we are privileged to witness on a daily basis the importance of providing a wonderful program that people use in ways that truly matter to them and their families. Thank you for your efforts in making sure that we fulfill our resolutions.

Wishing you a year filled with good health and much happiness.

Steven F. Molo

Pastoral Ministry Gathering

by Pat Morrison

On Tuesday, November 14, 2000, Gilda's Club Chicago hosted a gathering of faith community members to introduce Gilda's Club as a valuable resource for members of all congregations who are affected by cancer and create an opportunity for those providing pastoral care to network with each other.

Gilda's Club Chicago Executive Director Laura Jane Hyde provided those in attendance with a thorough overview of the Club's services and expressed interest in providing continued outreach within the Chicago pastoral community as an annual event.

Gilda's Club Chicago Program Director Caroline Thomas-Huh presented the results of a survey conducted by the Club's international headquarters on "Living with Cancer." Over 57 percent of respondents had been diagnosed (13 percent) or had one or more family members (51 percent) who had been diagnosed with cancer.

"A primary misconception among family members was that they perceived that people with cancer have considerable more difficulty living with cancer than they actually do," Thomas-Huh said. "Those with cancer believe that getting familial support is second only to obtaining appropriate treatment, but there is a large gap between expectation and the reality of finding support within the family. When those with cancer sought outside support, a majority experienced positive experiences from mutual sharing which reduced the sense of isolation."

Gilda's Club Chicago Member Janet Tures, living with fourth stage ovarian cancer, supported the survey's findings and told of the importance of Gilda's Club and the pastoral community by sharing her personal experiences.

"Cancer has provided an opportunity to enhance my personal spirituality in a new way and apply that relationship to help others detect ovarian cancer in its earliest stage using a relatively simple blood test in addition to the standard medical practice of a pap test," Tures said.

Chaplain Jim Manzardo of Children's Memorial Hospital discussed the process parents of children with cancer experience. "Parents initially equate cancer with death, use denial as a protective grief response, and fear a "relapse" after remission," he said. "But in due course, they evolve into a unique spirituality and relationship with the God of their understanding. Ultimately, these parents must confront their feelings of abandonment... 'Why us?' As they confront their loss of control, they begin to search for meaning amid the suffering, understanding the millions of ways to pray *to and with* God, and develop many ways to come face-to-face with death and be transformed."

Robert Kolatorowicz, a member of Gilda's Pastoral Planning Committee and representative from the Center for Spirituality at Old St. Patrick's Church, provided closing remarks and discussed the benefits of networking among the pastoral community with services such as Gilda's Club.

A luncheon and club tour followed providing the participants an opportunity to further interact with fellow ministers and develop a deeper understanding of the services Gilda's Club Chicago can provide to their organizations.



Sears volunteers enjoy
the Holiday Party

Featured Member: Karen Lamb by Lisa Juscik



Karen Lamb has been helping people all of her life. For 25 years, Lamb has worked as a nurse and now as an associate professor in nursing at Rush Presbyterian Hospital. But in November of 1998, it was she who was searching for help and it was Gilda's Club where she found it. That year Lamb's husband John was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor.

"Gilda's Club has been a place where I have been able to go where people understand what I have been going through," said Lamb. "Everyone in that community cares about you. They make help available to people who need support."

Lamb has taken advantage of many of the programs that Gilda's offers to its members. There is not a group lecture or class she hasn't attended.

"I have used practically every program Gilda's has to offer, I attended numerous support groups, writing seminars and even the cooking demonstrations," she said.

"After caring for John at the hospital, I would run to Gilda's to make sure I would make my group meetings," she said. "I would go to Gilda's when I needed to be alone and I also went to the Club when I needed someone to help me laugh. It is such a special place. The things you learn there help you cope with what you and your family are going through. The staff is the warmest and kindest group of people you'll ever meet."

John lived with cancer for five months. Lamb, however, continues to use Gilda's for support, but now also offers guidance to those members who may be going through a similar set of circumstances.

"After I lost my husband, I continued to visit the Club for support," said Lamb. "On numerous occasions I have stayed there until the place closed. It feels like home. The people there are like family to me."

"Gilda's has helped me to express who I am now. It has opened me to new experiences," she said. "I have attended many alumni groups. I want to be available to people who need support."

To this day, Lamb continues to help members of Gilda's Club and those patients and students she treats and teaches at Rush Presbyterian Hospital. Her specialty is gerontological studies--working with older adults.

"I wanted to work with older adults because I have always felt that they were underappreciated and that there was a lot to learn from them," said Lamb. "I wanted to teach because I enjoy working with people and want to make an impact on the student's life."

Lamb has been helping people all of her life, including her late husband John whom she met when he was a patient some 25 years ago at Rush Presbyterian Hospital. It was his illness that led her to Gilda's Club and it will be the people at Gilda's who benefit from her life experiences.



Noogiefest celebrants



Tom Cronin, Healthy Life Coach, and Outreach Volunteer

Cronin's Corner . . . The Healthy Life Coach

Tom Cronin • Healthy Life Coach



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: EAT MORE SALMON AND FLAXSEEDS

Omega-3 fatty acids are the common denominator for these two healthy foods.

The tiny brown **FLAXSEED** is rich in fiber, which lowers cholesterol, prevents constipation, and keeps blood sugar levels steady. ***And whole flaxseeds contain lignans, phytochemicals that may protect against cancer.*** Flaxseeds and their oil are among the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which may reduce your risk of heart disease. The omega-3s in flaxseeds also ease inflammation and improve mood.

Pulverize flaxseeds in a clean coffee grinder before eating them; otherwise they'll pass through your body undigested because the hulls are so tough. Store seeds in the refrigerator and grind about a cup at a time, because they go rancid quickly. Try to eat at least one tablespoon per day, more if your skin is dry or you are having constipation problems. Sprinkle ground flaxseeds on oatmeal, yogurt, salads, or blend into fruit smoothies.

Research on the benefits of cold water fish like **SALMON** began with the Inuit people in Greenland, who eat a diet rich in fish and rarely suffer heart attacks. Scientists give the credit to omega-3 fatty acids, a good fat in fish, that reduces your risk of blood clots and prevents heart attacks and strokes. An anti-inflammatory, fish oil may also reduce the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. ***In recent studies, these fats slowed the growth of cancerous tumors,*** improved the emotional state of people with bipolar disorder, and enhanced calcium absorption, reducing osteoporosis risk. Consider eating salmon – or other cold-water fish, such as mackerel, sardines and kippers – at least once a week.

For more information on the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, read Chapter 5, Week One of Dr. Andrew Weil's book *8 Weeks to Optimum Health*.

Featured Volunteer: Seymour Karoff

by Joyce Szymanski



Seymour Karoff describes himself as Gilda Club Chicago's resident handyman, but it's his talent for repairing frowns and turning them into smiles that has made him one of the Club's key volunteers.

Karoff was introduced to the Club by his daughter Andrea who serves as one the Club's program coordinators.

"Andrea called me down to the Club to see if I could help them out by fixing a sink," Karoff said. "I did that job but I was so impressed by the positive vibes I received from the staff and members, that I decided to volunteer at the Club on a regular basis."

Just a few months after the Club opened, Karoff began his stint as a regular Wednesday night volunteer. He helps the Club by doing "anything and everything"--that includes reception work and any of the physical repair work that needs to be done.

"I hang fixtures and help with any repair work while I'm there," Karoff said.

Karoff resides in Lincolnwood with his wife Bobbi. Besides Andrea, the couple also has another daughter (Pam) and son (Mike) and four grandchildren.

He works for Carson Pirie Furniture and recently helped secure a \$1,000 donation for the Club from Carson Pirie Furniture.

In his spare time, Karoff likes to golf and also likes to do handy work around his own home.

Cancer has touched his family so that brings another level of satisfaction to his volunteer work at Gilda's. "My father and brother both had cancer and I have even had a mild case of skin cancer," he said. "So I am intimately familiar with the disease."

While the Club may benefit from Karoff's talents, he claims to be the one who receives the benefits.

"I really get a sense of enjoyment while volunteering," he said. "When people are at the Club I tell them to put their hands on the walls and feel the positive vibes. The other day I received a hug and kiss from two of the members and that is really the grand reward of volunteering. Just being able to make people smile."

Dear Gilda's Club Chicago,

I've been a member for a year now. I am 42 yrs. old and a survivor of breast cancer. I thank God each day for all I have in my life and for Gilda's Club. I've met so many brave, wonderful women here. Also, some caring, sensitive men.

The support groups here have helped get me through some tough times.

I appreciate your thoughtfulness and caring.

Hope you have a long, healthy life.

Sincerely,

R. B.

Dear Gilda's Club Chicago,

I opened the red door of Gilda's Club Chicago on July 6, 1999. With me, my six year old son, and my cancer of the vocal cords, recently diagnosed. My second cancer in two years - I was scared, angry, desperate, and quite sure that I was the only person on the planet to be touched by such a tragedy. "Go to the Club! People there are going to give you a lot of support!" said a nurse at the center where I was starting my daily radiation treatments. I tried. Just to do something on this particular day, and not expecting any positive experience.

I was wrong. Smiles were waiting for me, behind the red door. One woman grabbed my son's hand - "We have toys for you!" One woman handed me the cup of coffee that I needed. Some words, read somewhere, came to my mind. "Anyone who does not believe in miracles, is not a realist." This welcome from the Club was one. Forgotten beliefs came back to me: the state of the mind could change the state of the body. Cancer did not have to be a tragedy, but could be a signal to make one pay attention to feelings and problems long time neglected.

I practiced what I learned through those classes everywhere: at home, at the grocery store ...very hard, emotional, and spiritual work ...to deal with cancer is a lonely journey. Gilda's is a shelter, an island of comfort in the middle of the battle. One can stop by for a cup of coffee, an hour of music or reading in one of those rooms where even the couch seems to hug you. Viewing a videotape, information about the disease, or lectures from an expert, or just "talking to someone." An evening of laughs at the cooking class. Gilda's is a family sharing together a crucial time. We read the fear of a test result in each other's eyes. We know what to say. Or what not to say, and simply, put an arm around a shoulder.

I was told a few weeks ago that I am cancer free. The radiation has something to do with it. Gilda's Club too. And for this, I am counting my blessings, to have found this red door.
Regards, G. F.

Gilda's Goings On

- * Children and families enjoyed storytelling, a snake, tarot card reading, arts and crafts, face painting, and many other games at Gilda's Club Chicago's third annual **Noogiefest Halloween party**. The children visited every station and "trick or treated" at an evening of fun at the club.
- * Gilda's Club Chicago has started two new monthly networking groups. "**Connections**" is an opportunity for members to share stories and memories of a loved one they have recently lost to cancer. The group is facilitated by Nancy Koeber, Ph.D. "**Living with Cancer in your 20's and 30's**" addresses the needs of young adults who are experiencing cancer. The group is facilitated by Keri Murphy, CCLS and childhood cancer survivor.
- * The "**Operation Shining Star**" Motorcade brought Santa and Mrs. Claus to the club for a visit. Representatives from Chicago's law enforcement community passed out gift bags to each child. Fox Photography donated individual portraits for each family, and Peach Tree kept the children occupied before and after their visit with arts and crafts.
- * Learning more about the Gilda's Club Chicago program were visitors at the **Illinois Department of Public Health Men's Health Fair**. Thanks to our male members who "manned" the information booth. The club was selected as a roundtable presenter for the **Illinois Department of Public Health's Women 2000 Conference**. Program Director Caroline Thomas-Huh and member Dee Haan discussed Gilda's Club and the philosophy that makes the program a success.
- * Gilda's Club Chicago hosted some very well-attended lectures that covered cutting-edge issues, including "**Immunotherapy: Its Uses and Future in the Treatment of Cancer**", Dr. Richard Burt; "**On Our Own Terms: Dying in America**", Dr. Julie Goldstein and Shari Myers, L.C.S.W.; and "**Novel Treatments in Lymphoma, Hodgkin's Disease and Leukemia**", Dr. Leo Gordon.
- * Welcome back to **Terra Johnson**, Noogieland Coordinator, who returned full-time from maternity leave in December. Special thanks to Riley Rae for agreeing to share her mom with all of us here at Gilda's Club Chicago.
- * **Are you handy around the house?** Do you have that special knack with mechanical beasts or plumbing mysteries? If so, we're looking for a few good people who are willing to be available to help out with minor maintenance items around the club from time to time. Up to the challenge? Contact Andrea Karoff and tell her to add your name to the growing list of mechanical angels.
- * **We're wishing for ...** three stools (bar height) for panel lectures; one rolling cart to help transport items between floors; one presentation easel.
- * Thank yous ... to the **Joffrey Ballet** for graciously donating Nutcracker tickets to Gilda's Club members, volunteers and staff.

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Mission Statement
 The mission of Gilda's Club Chicago is to provide a meeting place where people with cancer and their families and friends can join with others to build social and emotional support as a supplement to medical care. Free of charge, Gilda's Club Chicago offers support and networking groups, lectures, workshops, and social events in a conveniently located, homelike setting.

Living with cancer?
 Come as you are.™



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