a letter from the executive director

Friends,

When someone gets a diagnosis of cancer, life in that moment takes on a whole new meaning. First there is shock, numbness, disbelief. As time passes, treatment plans are in place, calendars are strewn with scheduled medical appointments, and a whole new language is being spoken that one never imagined they would have to comprehend. Life is forever altered.

Here Wellness Within enters the scene. Our center welcomes all who are newly diagnosed, actively in treatment, in survivorship, caregivers and their families. The minute you walk in the door you feel a sense of calm. We pride ourselves in providing a space of peacefulness, where clients may rest, restore and heal. Healing is different than treating or curing. Healing encompasses the totality of a person, bringing together the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual parts of oneself that have been traumatized by illness. It can run the spectrum of finding peace within circumstances to developing a mastery of tools that aid in stress reduction and the dealing with physical and emotional pain. For others it may be a renewed sense of belonging and return to joy. A person engaged in healing work can make a significant transformation in their quality of life with whatever time remains. Healing is always achievable even when curing is not.

Over and over again, we witness how the mind, body and spirit are traumatized with a life threatening illness. We know cancer has many effects on the whole of a person and his or her family, which was the impetus for us to offer an array of classes to help clients cope, de-stress, and heal. Our restorative yoga and Tai Chi/Qigong classes aim at easing the body into movement to stimulate healing. Mindfulness meditation aids in reducing stress. Nutrition classes offer suggestions to help repair the body and strengthen the immune system. A variety of expressive arts classes allow a voice to all that gets in the way of feeling whole again. Our six-week mind body skills groups teach tools to help deal with anxiety, depression and pain management. All of our classes are geared toward helping individuals make a significant transformation and improving their quality of life. Our work at Wellness Within is to help create the conditions and environment for healing the whole person through community, education, tools and practices that support the ability to experience wellness, within.

These invaluable tools are not often easily accessible, which is why we are committed to making them available to all regardless of income, race, creed or medical plan, with classes at little or no cost. This continues to be possible because of the support of our generous donors, committed Board of Directors, hardworking volunteers, and passionate team of administrators and instructors. We continue to build collaborations in the healthcare community and with other businesses and organizations in the region who wish to support those on the cancer journey. Last year, in 2014, we doubled the number of people we serve, established partnerships with the local hospitals’ nurse navigation programs and oncology social workers. With the support of the community, we participated in four new fundraisers. In 2015 we look forward to reaching even more people in the Sacramento area and beyond and partnering with the hospitals with our new outreach programs, inviting more speakers in to educate our clients on the latest in treatments and aids for side effects of chemo and radiation. We hope to continue to be a place the community can rely on to surround those whom cancer has afflicted and shower them with an abundance of support and tools to cope, manage and experience quality of life. We dream of a day when cancer is cured and our services are no longer needed in this way. Until then, we’ll be here continuing to evolve, grow and seek to meet the needs of our family members, neighbors, friends, physicians, nurses and all those in Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Yolo counties.

Patti
Meet our team

Board

Patti Brown // Executive Director
Brook Riviera // Program Director
Sarah Dillon // Development Director
Randi Beasley // Marketing and Outreach Coordinator
Jaymie Smith // Administrative Assistant

Dave Brown // President/Chairman
Bill Walters, MBA // Vice Chairman
Deena Math Spann // Treasurer
Roma Hanlon, J.D. // Secretary

Susan R. Binon, B.A
Julie Hersch, MD
Bridget Halvorson, J.D.
Patty McElwain

Admin

Gayle Rideout // Life Transitions, Hypotherapy
Jaymie Smith // Photography, Music and Motion
Jan Webb // Meditation
Courtney Tice // Expressive Arts
Priscilla Tupper // Tai Chi / Qi Gong
Susan Whitaker // Yoga

Instructors

Patti Brown // Meditation and Mindfulness
Diane Giuliani // Nutrition and Wellness
Iram Khan // Yoga & iRest
Brook Riviera // Nutrition and Wellness
Laurie Martin // Health Rythyms Drumming
Margie McCavitt // Horticulture and Nature Walks
Lisa Morgan // Expressive Writing

2014 finances

Revenue

$46,000 Donations and Grants
$78,000 Fundraiser Events

Expenses

$15,000 Admin
$5,000 Fundraising
$99,000 Programs
new! in 2014

Jan 9
- Started an Art for Teens class

Mar 1
- Randi Beasley came on board as the new outreach and marketing coordinator

May 31
- Learned about the benefits of fermented foods in our sauerkraut how-to class

Jun 21
- Guest speaker Michelle Sanderson came to share about lymphatic drainage for breast health

Jun 29
- Participated in the Re-Use-It drive and received $727.80 for the items donated!

Jul 6
- Rebecca Katz and Ernie Bodai joined our advisory board

Jul 26
- Offered first day-long meditation retreat

Aug 30
- Sleep specialist Amer Khan, M.D. came to share about improved sleep and rest

Sept 3
- Whole Foods Market spotlighted Wellness Within and donated 5% of the day’s proceeds.

Oct 12
- Hosted our first farm-to-fork community event

Nov 14
- Music and Motion began as the newest Expressive Arts class.
When my retina specialist told me he wanted to see me in three months, I just thought it was precautionary, that it was just to rule out an anomaly. But what I left with that day changed my life forever. After running more tests, my retina specialist told me I had ocular melanoma and handed me a brochure.

All the life had run out of me, I was cold and couldn’t hear anything, I was just numb. The brochure was rather grim, providing statistical information about the disease noting it was a rare and aggressive cancer spreading to the liver and lungs. I was told I would be scheduled for surgery within a month and that’s when it hit me like a ton of bricks, I broke down sobbing. While my doctor and his staff were empathetic, they could not console me, there was nothing they could say or do to make this go away or even make it better. I was beside myself, literally.

I underwent surgery to place permanent metal markers in my left eye to help guide the radiation. The surgery went well but after surgery, I was miserable. I began giving up, I could not see myself getting better – I couldn’t see or hear, leaving me feeling so isolated. Everything I knew was gone. I couldn’t drive, or go anywhere, it was painful just to have the light on, I couldn’t even watch tv. My independence was gone. I thought about how horrible this was and if I would ever be the same again, if this was how my life would be now. My thoughts kept me trapped in my own personal turmoil.

On December 1, 2014, I began going to Wellness Within on a daily basis, taking every class offered. It became my new work, and little did I realize I was working on me. It saved me from me, from giving in to despair, isolation and fear. It helped me to find little simple joys again, to redefine my life and really live life to the fullest. Wellness Within made me feel so welcomed and loved, unconditionally. They got me and I got them—it’s a mutual understanding and love for one another, for those fighting the same but different fight. When I am at Wellness Within, I am in peace, in acceptance of who I am and how far I have come with nothing to prove to anyone. I am allowed to focus on me and my happiness and forget about the worries and woes of this disease. I don’t have to come dressed up or put on a fake facade that everything is ok. I am allowed to me, to be emotional, to cry and grieve when I need to or be overwhelmed with joy at something so simple as seeing a flower bloom on the first day of spring. I’ve shared my struggles and listened to others facing the same challenges and have made true forever friends that are nurturing and loving. I’ve been given a toolbox filled with many different tools to be able to face the daily challenges in my life and am able to pick the tool that best fits my need at that moment—maybe reading a book, mediation, yoga, nutrition, writing, dancing, drumming, walking and so many more. Whatever avenue I choose, it is because of Wellness Within.

I believe so strongly in Wellness Within that I share the program with everyone I know that has been affected by this disease and donate on a regular basis. I have shared my experiences with friends who aren’t affected by cancer and they too are in awe of the program and wish they could experience it without enduring cancer. It’s such an amazing program, going deep into your core, a program everyone could benefit from. It is because of this that after returning to work, I continue to attend Wellness Within classes in the evening and weekends. I know the impact that Wellness Within has had on my life and continues to have, keeping me grounded and focused. I was able to find happiness and hope that I wasn’t sure existed anymore and I am no longer angry over why I got this disease, but am able to embrace it. Knowing without it, I may not have ever met the wonderful people I have met or learned the life changing lessons I needed to learn. I am forever grateful to all that contribute to this program. You have truly changed my life for the better. Thank you!

Carolyn Flores
individual donors

JULIE ADAMS
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BANK OF AMERICA
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FOOD SERVICE INSURANCE MANAGERS
FOUNDATION DI SOGNA
HAWKS
KAISER PERMANENTE COMMUNITY GIVING CAMPAIGN
LAHUACA PERUVIAN CUISINE
thank you!

vocunteers

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thank you!