

Wellness House

THE FIRST TEN
YEARS

— 2006 - 2016 —

Ten years ago, a 40-year-old breast cancer patient and her three young daughters inspired a team of Annapolis professionals to create what some people said couldn't be created. Her story, and the story of many other cancer patients in our community, was the framework on which Wellness House was built and one which guides the mission of this organization today.

Wellness House obtained a 501©3 status in 2006 and was established as a nonprofit organization that would provide free services to cancer patients and their loved ones. It also would help them during the cancer treatment process. The services were designed to support the non-medical side of cancer and would provide strength and support to all those living with cancer – both the patient and their loved ones. What we learned from the brave mother of three and her children, is that cancer is a family disease. Cancer not only affects the person who has it, but also everyone who loves them.

While this patient was undergoing radiation therapy for breast cancer, her children (ages 6, 8, and 10) were out of school and, therefore, spent their entire summer break in the radiation waiting room with their mother. They did not understand what was happening, and despite their mother's attempt to find support groups for the children, they felt very alone and

frightened. One day in July, the youngest child asked their mother's reconstructive surgeon, Dr. Kelly Sullivan, "...is my Mommy going to die?" The mother was distraught and in desperate need of support, and she was one of several other cancer patients in the medical office that day who were looking for the same support services that were not available.



Dr. Sullivan and her husband, Dr. Justin Cashman, both had personal and professional experiences with cancer patients who were in need of support services and unable to find the right environment. The idea for Wellness House grew from the input of different patients and friends dealing with cancer. The common vision was a home-like environment where different cancer patients and their loved ones could gather and have both formal and informal meetings to help each other through the long and difficult process of cancer treatment. They wanted a place where they could take off a wig and feel normal. They wanted a place where children could meet other children who had a mommy or daddy with cancer. They wanted to learn how to explain cancer to a 4-year-old, an 8-year-old, a teenager, and their boss. They wanted to be able to do artwork and forget about cancer for a little while. They wanted a place where they could have hope, and be well, and live without feeling the burden of cancer, and know that they are not alone.

Drs. Sullivan and Cashman brought this idea to the Annapolis Rotary Club (where they were both members) and the club immediately adopted the idea and formed the framework and initial financial support to give the idea a chance. The Founding Board of Directors were seven Rotarians (Dr. Kelly Sullivan, Dr. Justin Cashman, Mr. Ron Baradel, Esq., Mr. Ron Beiberich, Rev. Henry Green, Mrs. Alice Neily-Mutch, and Mr. Richard Wright, Esq.) who gave their time and talents to form the strategic plan, apply for nonprofit status, and begin forming the framework for Wellness House. Rotary provided the initial \$5,000 grant and with this, Wellness House grew wings.

In the early years, Wellness House provided a mentoring support program out of Dr. Sullivan's medical office, and began research and training to provide the community's first family cancer support program – CLIMB – Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery.

In July 2008, Janet Richardson-Pierson opened her heart and her home to Wellness House and invited the organization to move into her beautiful farmhouse on Mas Que Farm. It is there that Wellness House truly came to life and began rapidly expanding its programs and membership.



In the eight years that Wellness House has been open in Mas Que Farm, it has provided support services for more than 6,000 members in our community. Currently Wellness House has more than 300 active volunteers and more than 30 programs for cancer patients and their loved ones. Wellness House remains a very special place where all services are free of charge. Free services are possible because of the generous donations from individuals and businesses in our community and because of all the incredible volunteers who donate their time and talents to keeping our programs running.

Wellness House is a home away from home, and a place of comfort and companionship. It is a place where neighbors are helping neighbors face the challenges of cancer with strength and hope. Wellness House was established with the determination of a group of Rotarians, but it has grown because of the love and commitment of an amazing community that still believes in helping each other. Wellness House is an Annapolis gem, and it is one of the great places in Annapolis that make this town the best place to live, work, and play. We look forward to watching Wellness House grow over the next ten years with the continued support from this great community.



Cancer patients, their loved ones, and volunteers are welcome to visit Wellness House and feel the peace, serenity, and love that encompass this magical place.



Wellness House
OF ANNAPOLIS

Providing Strength & Support for those Living with Cancer

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