

Rediscovering Joy

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by Jim Warren

One of the most natural first responses to the diagnosis of cancer is an overwhelming sense of loneliness and isolation. As much as our friends and loved ones want to help us through this frightening experience, we find ourselves retreating from others, moving inside our siege walls and barring the gates. Yet, what we need most is someone to sit with us, to hug us and tell us it's okay to feel crummy and unattractive and that they still care about us anyway.

Did you know that joy in our life can strengthen our immune system and improve our health? Being joyful and positive releases endorphins and other natural hormones that strengthen the immune system to help fight off any kind of disease. So, how do we add joy to our life? Lawrence LeShan in his book *Cancer as a Turning Point* suggests a "Joy List" as one way to add joy. Basically, he suggests that we start by making a list of all those things that bring joy to our life.

It took me over a month to discover most of my joy items. I plan to keep my list open forever. I carry a copy with me and post others where I see them every day—my bathroom mirror, office tack board, and the door of my refrigerator. Whenever I can, I do something on my list—I call a friend or put a joyful activity on my calendar; just planning for a more joyous future can be uplifting in itself.

If you're currently fighting cancer, as I am, making a Joy List can have several positive effects on our life. First, just spending time thinking about the things that have brought joy can lift your spirits. Second, even when I feel rotten my Joy List reminds me of joyful things. I don't know what will be on your Joy List; but am happy to share my list with you:

- Flying small planes
- Going to the ocean
- Spending time at our favorite Hot Springs Resort
- Getting together with old friends
- Succeeding at almost anything
- Being organized
- Reading, learning new things



Jim Warren, right, and fellow group participant Tom Campbell share a moment of joy.

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Volunteers. Donors. Legacy Society Members



The Wellness Community Valley / Ventura is involved in helping people deal with cancer, both cancer patients and their families. Several members of our family have suffered with cancer. As a member of the Board of Directors over the past seven years, Chris has seen how very successfully The Wellness Community offers a wide variety of programs, including professionally facilitated support groups, yoga, educational workshops, as well as various social activities. This is why we support The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura with an annual gift and why we made the decision to include it in our wills.

Chris and Debbie Rolin

Become a member of The Legacy Society by creating your own trust or including The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura in your will and know that you are making a difference in many cancer patients' futures. For information, please contact Suzanne Drace, President, by calling 805.379.4777 or at SuzanneDrace@wellnesscommunityhope.org



Our Mission

The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura helps people with cancer and their loved ones enhance their health and well-being by providing a professional program of emotional support, education and hope.

We Salute and We Celebrate

As we celebrate the 16th Anniversary of The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura on Friday, June 8th at the Four Seasons Hotel, Westlake Village, we also salute Dr. Harold Benjamin, the Founder of The Wellness Community. His pioneering concepts of cancer care have endured for over 25 years and have become the standard of psychosocial oncology care around the world. Applying Dr. Benjamin's concepts, during the past 16 years we have served over 2,000 individuals each year, providing them programs of information, hope, and support FREE of charge. Many more people in our community need our services and many of you have stepped forward to help us raise needed funds for this effort.



Keith Gregory, Chair of the Board

There are many ways one can help. For example, Jim Warren, an inspirational cancer survivor, shares with us the value of Rediscovering Joy and he provides participants with information on financial matters. Together with his wife, Christie, Jim came to TWC not sure of what to expect. In return both he and Christie found exceptional support—so much so that Jim was motivated to share his Joy List and other expertise with others.

Under the leadership of Bea Waggoner and Judie Williams, the 15th Anniversary Holiday Homes Tour was a wonderful success and provided us with funds for many programs. We encourage you to support our 2007 Holiday Homes Tour, where you will view four beautiful homes.



Suzanne Drace, President

Our Garden of Hope is projected to be completed in 2008. It will provide needed additional space for participant meetings, social visiting, and just plain relaxing and meditating, all in a beautiful, park-like environment. There are so many ways in which you can become involved in making this a reality: there's a 200 Friends for Hope option in which you can pay tribute to a loved one by helping to build the Tribute Wall of Hope.

Our Strides for Hope Team is training hard for the upcoming Labor Day fundraiser—Disneyland 5K and half-marathon. Anyone who is interested in experiencing the 'real kicker' of spending a fun day with selfless people and who would like to give back in whatever way they choose, please give us a call.

Because of your overwhelming support, our recent 16th Anniversary Gala, "Celebration of Life," was a great success and we thank the following sponsors of the Gala:



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Anniversaries—Our 16th & The Wellness Community's 25th

by Marty Nason

In 1988, in a cheerful, yellow, clapboard two-story house in Santa Monica, Beth Kin and I first met Harold Benjamin, founder of The Wellness Community. We were there to learn about The Wellness Community by attending one of the bi-weekly "Orientation Groups" for people with cancer. The living room was full. There were about five people with cancer. They and their loved ones walked in visibly scared and anxious; the fear was palpable. The rest of us were visitors from around the country who were considering starting a Wellness Community.

A volunteer gave us an introduction to The Wellness Community and then John, a Wellness Community member, shared his story—diagnosis of aggressive brain tumor, given six weeks to live, but eight years later, although the tumor was still there, he was living a full and active life. A lot of hope suddenly filled the room. About an hour into the meeting, you could see the attendees' shoulders relax and their faces soften. By the end of the meeting there were smiles on their faces, laughter and hugs. It was a transformational experience for them—and for me. Witnessing the Orientation Group that day was a key experience that led Beth and me to start a Wellness Community for the patients and their families in our community.

The Orientation Group meeting illustrates the power of The Wellness Community. It is gaining hope from a cancer survivor and realizing you are not alone... it is the comfort of being with others who truly understand your feelings and what you are going through in a way that family and friends cannot. I had learned and used many different state-of-the-art approaches as a nurse specialist counseling people with acute and chronic illness, but I had never seen this transformation of attitude and spirit occur in the space of just two hours.

At the time of our visit, there were just two Wellness Communities. People came from as far as San Diego, Ojai, Northern California, and from other states to get what The Wellness Community had to offer ~ hope, empowerment, community. The need was so great, that more than 22 professionally led support groups met weekly at the little



The "little yellow house" where it all began in 1982.

yellow house in Santa Monica! Some cancer patients were even commuting each week from our communities of Thousand Oaks and Oxnard.

The need for holistic cancer care and the effectiveness of The Wellness Community model

led many, including Beth and me, to lead a grass-roots effort to start a Wellness Community in our area. Our decision culminated in TWC Valley/Ventura opening its doors in the summer of 1991. In our first two weeks of operation, we welcomed 95 cancer patients and their families from areas ranging from Reseda to Ojai; by the end of the first month, we saw over 130 participants and provided more than 1200 hours of direct service.

Long before "mind/body connection" and "patient empowerment" became popular buzzwords, Harold Benjamin and staff at The Wellness Community were applying the findings of "psychoneuroimmunology"—the study of the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and the immune system—to people with cancer. Harold Benjamin was a genius! His pioneering concepts of cancer care have endured and become the standard for psychosocial oncology care around the world. I believe that two of these core concepts are the most important: (1) the Patient-Active Concept and (2) the notion of a therapeutic community.

Rejecting the notion that people with cancer had to be hopeless and helpless victims of cancer, Benjamin developed a set of guidelines cancer patients can use as partners in the fight for recovery. He called these ideas the Patient Active Concept. It acknowledges that there are many ways cancer patients can join with their physicians in the fight for their lives and that such involvement will not only improve the quality of their lives but might also enhance the possibility of recovery.

A second pivotal concept that makes The Wellness Community unique is community. It is perhaps the most important word in our name. A therapeutic community is a place of warmth and good company where adults with cancer and their families come together and form an extended family of people fighting cancer together—a place where cancer patients can meet, socialize, and give and receive peer support on a continuous basis.

Today there are 21 facilities throughout the United States, five in development, 28 satellites, two facilities abroad in Tel Aviv and Tokyo, and a community online at The Virtual Wellness Community that can be reached through our website, www.TwcVv.org.

As The Wellness Community celebrates its 25th anniversary, we at The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura celebrate our 16th by serving people with cancer and their loved ones at our main location in Westlake Village, our new satellite in Paso Robles, and five off-site locations with programs in both English and Spanish. We serve more than 2,000 individuals each year, all FREE of charge. We thank YOU, members of the generous community that makes this possible with your gifts of time, unique talent, and money.

"A lot of hope suddenly filled the room..."

Rediscovering Joy, continued from page 3

- ♦ Teaching and mentoring others
- ♦ Hard exercise that breaks a sweat
- ♦ Being outdoors
- ♦ Music—singing, playing my guitar
- ♦ Initiating acts of kindness

Besides making a Joy List, there are other ways I try to bring joy to my life. There is joy to be derived from simple acts of kindness. For example, we can choose to be kind and courteous, we can open a door for someone, smile at a stranger, offer to assist someone who is having difficulty. Amazingly, people receiving and observing the act of kindness have similar beneficial results. Imagine! Kindness extended, received, or observed beneficially affects the physical health and feelings of everyone involved!"

Joy Lists, relationships, and kindness, whenever possible, changing those things that bring distress rather than joy – these are some of the things I am trying to do to bring more peace and joy into my life. I hope that you, too, can learn to reduce your stress by seeking more joy in your life. I try to feed joy and hope you will, too.

My Story:

Two and a half years ago, my wife Christie and I came to The Wellness Community because she feared she was burning out her friends with her concern over my prolonged cancer fight. She had driven by and seen the sign on Hampshire Road, and one of my work associates had pointed me to their website, so we came for an orientation with Marty Nason.

At that point, I had already been fighting my stage-4 metastatic colon cancer for over two years, was busy with my treatment regimen, and didn't feel like I needed a support group. But Marty told me that cancer often pushes people beyond their limits and that many men who had never been "groupies" have found great comfort at The Wellness Community support groups. She recommended that I attend at least three meetings and then make a decision about continuing in the group. By the third meeting the strangers had become friends whose lives and stories meant a lot to me. I have stayed two and half years and counting!

Financial Gifts...at NO COST to you!

Here are some ways you can help The Wellness Community provide services to more people who need them without spending any additional money.



Save money and help us, too! The Wellness Community is proud to announce a partnership with Amazon.com. Please access Amazon.com through our website (www.TwcVv.org) by clicking on the Amazon logo. A percentage of your Amazon purchases will be donated by Amazon to The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura. Please support this program and be sure to tell your family and friends about it!



Powerful, No Sweat Fundraising! The Wellness Community has an incredible opportunity to partner with over 60 local and national merchants involved in a program called e-scrip. It's easy – you pre-register your Vons or Pavilions Club card, your Chevron gas card, as well as any other Visa, Master Card, American Express, Discover, or debit cards you use and 2% or more is donated directly to The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura.

To make it happen, just go on-line to www.escrip.com and use the group ID number 7240121. If we can sign up 1,000 people, it will mean an estimated donation of \$100,000 to The Wellness Community to fund existing and additional programs.

Cars 4 Causes®

Donate a vehicle - The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura has made arrangements for vehicle donations through www.cars4causes.net.

In-kind gifts

Various items and donated professional services are always needed – they enable us to use more of the funds we raise for programs. See our wish list for ideas. In addition, donated professional services help tremendously. We always need:

- . Frequent flyer miles to be used as opportunity drawing or auction prizes at our fundraising events
- . Gift items, vacation packages, timeshares, etc. to include in silent and live auctions
- . Office & Kitchen supplies (paper, printer cartridges, facial tissue, paper towels, etc.)
- . Nutritional snacks for any upcoming educational workshop and for Kid's Circle

Gifts of Time

We are always in need of volunteers for our special events, health fairs, and other activities! We're also looking for help in our office during the week (i.e., answering phone calls, assisting with clerical duties, etc.). If you are interested in helping The Wellness Community in this way, please call Marilyn at 805.379.4777.

The Garden of Hope

The Wellness Community's prominent site on Hampshire Road is about to undergo a metamorphosis and become a beautiful, landscaped *Garden of Hope*—a reflection of all that The Wellness Community is—a safe haven that provides peace, hope, and strength to thousands of people. It will be a welcoming outdoor garden retreat and gathering space for individuals and groups that The Wellness Community embraces. It will also be a place of beauty for the local Westlake Village community who pass by that highly-visible corner.

The momentum behind this project is David Wank, a Board member, who took 2003 Board Chairman Ken Kossoff's vision to the next level by making it a reality. David is motivated by his gratitude to The Wellness Community for providing such exceptional support to his father, Melvin Wank. The enthusiasm for this project has been so great that David is the first to shun any spotlight on himself, saying, "It's been a lot of people's vision and energy."

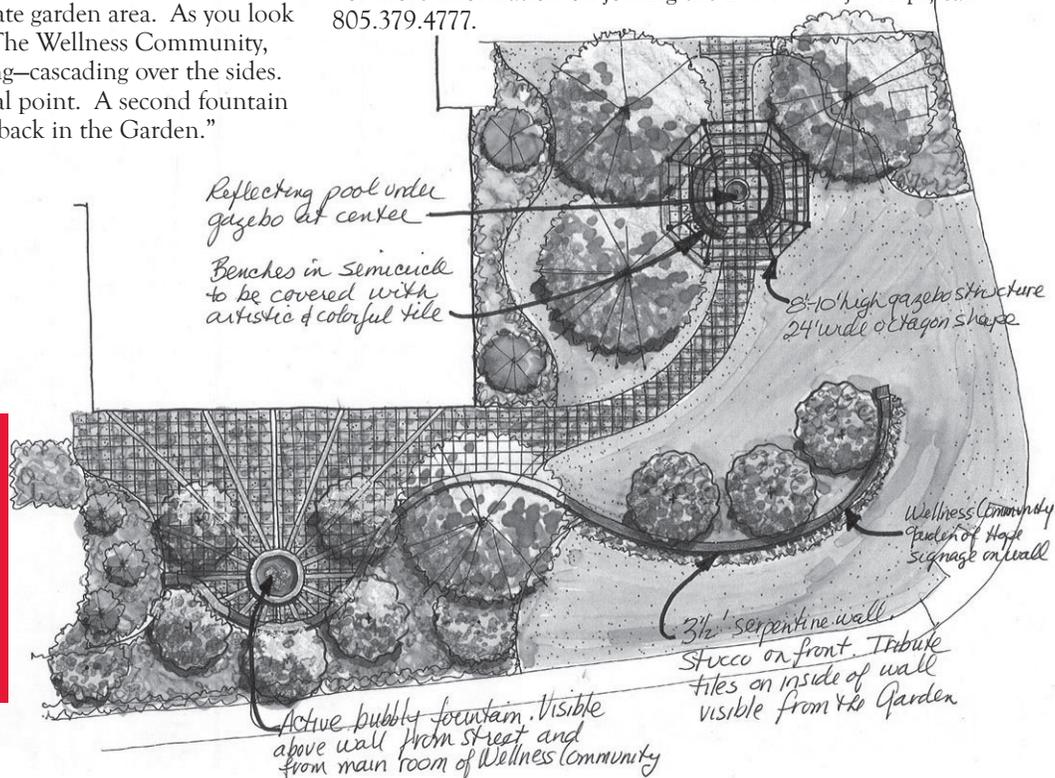
Carol Robinson is the licensed landscape architect whose firm, Landmark Design, will create the Garden. She says, "I am thrilled to be able to be a part of this project because it's going to be a beautiful space, and it will serve the mission of the organization so well." Here's what we can look forward to, says Carol: "There are two separate areas with fountains connected by a meandering walkway of decorative pavers. A long serpentine wall separates the garden from the adjacent street and serves as a backdrop for the private garden area. As you look outside from the main gathering room of The Wellness Community, you see a large fountain with water bubbling—cascading over the sides. The fountain is lit at night—a beautiful focal point. A second fountain is at the center of the Gazebo, which is set back in the Garden."

Here's how you can support the *Garden of Hope*: The wall facing the garden will be called the *Tribute Wall of Hope* with special 12" ceramic tiles. You can have your name or the name of a loved one to whom you are paying tribute engraved on one of the tiles. In doing so, you become a member of the *200 Friends for Hope*. It's a supporting gift of at least \$2,500, and by making this tax-deductible, unrestricted contribution, you are contributing to The Wellness Community's vitally-important programs and services, as well as honoring or remembering a loved one. There's a host of choices should you want to go beyond a remembrance tile; you may sponsor a fountain, park bench, or the Gazebo.

In speaking with the people who are supporting the *Garden of Hope*, it is so evident that the passion driving the 2008 completion of this task comes from each person's heart-felt pledge of gratitude to The Wellness Community. Those who have been touched by this special place on Hampshire Road know how much the people inside care. That is what motivates people like David Wank to become actively involved in making sure that The Wellness Community continues to grow, flourish, and give hope – one step at a time – and this step happens to be an incredibly beautiful *Garden of Hope* that will be there in perpetuity.

For more information on joining the *200 Friends for Hope*, call 805.379.4777.

Architect's drawing of the Garden of Hope.



Virtual Wellness Community

Now, cancer support services are available anytime, anywhere – just visit our website at www.Twc.Vv.org and click on "Virtual Wellness Community." Here, cancer patients find real-time online support groups facilitated by trained professionals such as our own Anne Gessert. Also available are educational resources, mind-body exercises, and nutritional information. Visit it soon!

Join the Strides for Hope Team

It takes energy, focus and discipline to run a marathon, a half-marathon or a fun 5K walk/run. Everyone experiences challenges along the way, and they feel the exhilaration of conquering the finish line. Does that sound like life? It is. *The Strides for Hope Team* has an extra special component: the team members are committed to a great cause, and the joy it brings them exceeds everyone's expectations.

Valerie Woods and Robin and Debbie Campbell are three of the many inspirational leaders who are on the Strides for Hope Team because they believe strongly in the gift they are giving back. Valerie says, "This is different from other marathons. Our team is a band of merry people who are selfless and who share a common goal: to help the people who need our help. It's the most uplifting experience to watch cancer survivors doing the race. That's the real kicker. It's also a race that doesn't have an ending ~ it always has a beginning and a new start. The team just grows exponentially and the word continually spreads as we look forward to our next Strides for Hope event. Each stride is a triumphant step." Valerie's energy and her own private determination to make a difference in people's lives is extraordinary. She recently completed the Kentucky Derby Half-Marathon in April, where she single-handedly raised \$15,000 for The Wellness Community. Robin Campbell adds, "Since the services of The Wellness Community are all free of charge, the public can become involved by donating to a Strides for Hope runner or by just calling The Wellness Community and pledging a donation for all their good efforts."

Anyone who is interested in experiencing the 'real kicker' of spending a fun day with people who are completely selfless, can do so by joining the team to run or walk at the Disneyland 5K or Half-Marathon on Labor Day weekend, Sept. 1 - 3, 2007. For more information, please see our website, www.TwcVv.org or call Liz Gregory at 805.379.4777. Mickey is waiting to greet you!



Valerie Woods, right, half-marathon participant and top fundraiser, and coach Gloria Rios.



Members of the TWC vV Strides for Hope team after taking part in the Kentucky Derby Marathon: (l to r) rear: Suzanne Drace, Caroline Troupe, Liz Acosta, Sharon Seravic, Valerie Woods, Dave McFadden, Marianne Newcombe; front: Robin Campbell, Debbie Campbell, Eddie Neiman, Coach Gloria Rios (crouched), Maria-Feliz Ryan, Ray Aramburu, Fran Coombs-McFadden, Liz Gregory.

Calendar of Events

Weekly:

Orientation Meetings no appointment needed
Tuesday 7pm & Friday 10 am

Participant Groups require attendance at orientation, interview and commitment to regular attendance.
Tuesdays 10am-12pm & 6-8pm, Wednesdays 6-8pm, Thursdays 10am-12pm (Oxnard, Women only, Tuesdays 1-2:30pm and Camarillo Wednesdays 6-8pm)

Family and Friends Drop-In Group
Tuesdays 6-8pm, Thursdays 10am-12pm

Family Groups requires attendance at orientation and commitment to regular attendance.
Wednesdays 6-8pm

Kids Circle (ages 5-11)
Tuesdays 4-5:30pm

Beginning Yoga
Wednesdays 4:30-5:30pm

Tai Chi Chih
Thursdays 9:30-10am

Qigong
Saturdays 9-10am

Knotty Knitters
Tuesdays 1-3:30pm

Yoga for Stress Management
Mondays 11:30am-12:45pm

Relaxation & Guided Imagery
Fridays 12-1pm

Bi-Weekly:

Quilting Club
1st & 3rd Wednesdays 6:30-9pm

Watercolor Art Class
2nd & 4th Tuesdays 1-3pm

The Wellness Connection
2nd & 4th Tuesdays 6:30-8:30pm

Transition Group
2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30-8:30pm

Gynecological Cancer Group
1st & 3rd Mondays 6:30pm-8:30pm

Monthly:

Brain Tumor Group
1st Thursday 6:30-8:30pm

Multiple Myeloma Group
1st Saturday 11:30am-1:30pm

Prostate Cancer Group
3rd Saturday 10:30am-12:30pm

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Group
3rd Thursday 6:30-8:30pm

Breast Cancer Connection
Time & Date Varies

Upcoming Workshops:

Reiki with Bill & Kay Davis
Monday June 11th

Cooking Demo with Melissa Moore Boyle
Monday June 25th

Living with Advance Breast Cancer with Dr. Silvana Martino
Thursday June 28 6:30-8:30pm

Caregiver Training for Families of Brain Tumor Patients
Saturday July 28th

For more information:

Visit www.TwcVv.org

or call 805-379-

4777

Off-Site Programs & Satellites:

Camarillo Group
Wednesdays 6-8pm
3639 E Las Posas Road, Suite 117

Oxnard—Women's Support Group
Tuesdays 1-2:30pm
1700 N Rose Ave, Suite 145

Central Coast Satellite Serving San Luis Obispo County, call 805-238-4411 for more information on programs

Programs in Spanish:

Bienvenidos A Wellness
2nd & 4th Tuesdays 6:30pm
Canoga Park Senior Center, 7326 Jordan Ave

Martes Social
3rd Tuesday at 7pm
Canoga Park Senior Center, 7326 Jordan Ave

Oxnard Support Group
2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30pm
1700 N Rose Ave #145, Oxnard

Social Events:

Breast Cancer Connection Luncheon
June 22

Las Mujere Unidas en Celebracion
June 23

Coming Soon:

Laughter Yoga

Intimacy Workshop with Wendy Basil