

Patient Advocate Corner

Offering Free Support, Education, and Hope for Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers: The Wellness Community



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By Kim Thiboldeaux

For almost 25 years, The Wellness Community (TWC), an international nonprofit organization, has been providing support, education, and hope for people affected by cancer. TWC's professionally led support groups, educational workshops, and stress-reduction programs are anchored in peer-reviewed, evidence-based research. TWC utilizes the Patient

Active Concept, created by founder Harold Benjamin, PhD, which states that people with cancer can learn vital skills to regain control, reduce feelings of isolation, and restore hope—regardless of the stage of their disease.

In a home-like setting, people with cancer can connect with and learn from each other. Today, there are 21 Wellness Communities across the United States, five in development, 28 satellites within the United States, two centers abroad (Tokyo, Japan, and Tel Aviv, Israel), and The Virtual Wellness Community online. All TWC programs are provided free of charge.

Reaching Into the Community

In TWC's community-based setting, people affected by cancer can easily access information and participate in a wide range of programs and activities, including

- Professionally-led support groups
- Educational workshops
- Nutrition classes
- Stress-reduction and movement classes
- Professionally guided relaxation and visualization sessions
- Cancer-specific and age-specific networking groups
- Art and music therapy programs
- Joke Fest and movie nights
- Resource library

Reaching Across the Globe

Online on The Virtual Wellness Community (www.thewellnesscommunity.org), visitors find much of the same

information offered to people who visit our 23 Wellness Communities.

The online Resource Library provides informational and educational resources on a variety of cancer-related topics, including suggested readings, Web sites, and resources on nutrition and stress reduction. The site features in-depth resources developed by TWC, including

- *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Take Control of Side Effects with Medicine, Mind and Body*
- *Frankly Speaking About New Discoveries in Cancer*
- *Frankly Speaking About Lymphoma*
- *Frankly Speaking About Lung Cancer: Stepping Back to Take a Closer Look*
- *Patient Active Guide to Living With Ovarian Cancer*

Information is just the tip of TWC's online outreach. TWC's professionally led Online Support Groups offer free, secure interaction for people with cancer and their loved ones in English and Spanish from any Internet-enabled computer in the world. A sampling of groups includes breast cancer, caregivers, colorectal cancer, lung cancer, mesothelioma, and ovarian cancer.

TWC's newest online community is *Group Loop* (www.grouploop.org), which provides resources and online support groups specifically for teenagers living with cancer and their families. In 2004, *Group Loop* received the Outstanding Website WebAward for a Non-Profit Organization from the Web Marketing Association (www.webaward.org), and in the summer of 2005 it was included as a resource in an article in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Our research indicates that referrals from health care professionals of all types are the best way for us to reach people affected by cancer. On behalf of every person in need of cancer support, education and hope, please tell your patients and their families to contact us online at www.thewellnesscommunity.org, via e-mail to help@thewellnesscommunity.org, or toll free by phone at 888-793-WELL.

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