



# Sunflower Wellness

September 2009

The Word from Sunflower

*Planting seeds for health and hope*

## **Our Mission:**

**Sunflower Wellness provides therapeutic movement and exercise for people living with cancer.** We bridge the gap between medical treatment and physical activity by working with oncologists to bring exercise directly to patients. We are committed to using the latest cancer and fitness research to set standards in our field.

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## **Introduction: A Brief History**

Sunflower Wellness was founded in 2004, following the death of Chris Goad, certified trainer and cancer patient. In 2003, Chris and fellow certified trainers Regan Fedric and Jane Clark, and Garrett Smith, MD, an oncologist at UC San Francisco Medical Center, established the IMPACT program. Philanthropically funded by Western Athletic Clubs, IMPACT grew to provide exercise training to over 400 people living with cancer during its successful 5-year run. Inspired by his own battle with cancer, Chris planted the seeds for Sunflower Wellness by writing the first full draft of a **cancer and exercise manual** for fitness professionals.

Missing Chris greatly, his friends, family, clients and colleagues honored his efforts and vision in 2004 by founding Sunflower Wellness, Inc., a San Francisco-based nonprofit dedicated to bringing therapeutic movement and exercise to people living with cancer. Chris's manual and the IMPACT program he helped create continue to inspire and inform Sunflower Wellness today. You can read more about our organization at [www.sunflowerwellness.org](http://www.sunflowerwellness.org).

## **Great programs**

Research shows that exercise and physical activity can dramatically improve the quality of life for cancer patients going through treatment, as well as reduce later recurrence and increase survivorship. With this in mind, Sunflower Wellness has partnered with Western Athletic Clubs, owners of The San Francisco Bay Club and Bay Club Marin, to provide exercise opportunities to Bay Area cancer patients through special classes taught by Sunflower-trained instructors. This summer, cancer patients and their caregivers began to enjoy expanded programs at these spectacular facilities such as yoga, group exercise, Pilates and swimming.

Our joint program now also allows cancer patients to join Bay Club Marin and The San Francisco Bay Club with reduced-cost 6-month gym memberships that include our specialized exercise classes. We owe extraordinary thanks to Regan Fedric and Jane Clark for their tireless efforts in putting this program together.

In February of this year, Regan began teaching a weekly group exercise class at Bay Club Marin for people living with cancer. With only word-of-mouth promotion, over 20 people

came to the first class, and it's still growing. Clearly, the Sunflower Wellness/Western Athletic Clubs partnership is filling a need.

## Great Support

Sunflower is thrilled to announce that we received a grant in April of this year from **To Celebrate Life Breast Cancer Foundation** of Marin County, CA! We are exceedingly grateful. The funds will allow us to continue to provide exercise consultation sessions, group classes and individual exercise training to people who are unable to afford those services.

We have also submitted proposals to the Mount Zion Health Fund, Marin Community Foundation, and Susan G. Komen for the Cure. More applications are on the way!

## Great Need

Sunflower is in the process of creating a new Cancer Exercise Counselor position at the UC San Francisco Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center in the Ida and Joseph Friend Cancer Resource Center. The Counselor will provide one-hour exercise consultation sessions for cancer patients, along with recommendations customized to fit their circumstances. The Cancer Resource Center currently supports nutrition counseling for cancer patients, but does not yet have a similar position for exercise. With your support, we plan to change that, and expand this service to other major cancer centers in California and beyond.

We are also seeking funding for the development of yoga and exercise classes specifically designed for cancer patients in local community centers. The demand continues to grow as people learn about our programs.

Fortunately, these classes are relatively affordable. The annual cost for a weekly, hour-long class with a specialized instructor is \$3,000. And \$3,750 will allow us to sponsor a weekly ninety-minute yoga class for a year.

## Great Gala Help

Luckily, we have a few angels smiling upon us. Bay Club Marin named Sunflower Wellness as the beneficiary of their annual charity gala—an event committed to a real spirit of giving and generosity (as well as attracting the best-dressed of Marin County!)

This evening of food, fun, and dancing is targeted for March 5, 2010. Ticket proceeds will benefit Sunflower AND we will hold a silent auction throughout the evening! So, you would like to donate a week at your vacation home in Tahoe, yes? Don't be surprised if you hear from us as we collect as many fabulous, salable items as we can for the auction. Please contact Regan at [regan@sunflowerwellness.org](mailto:regan@sunflowerwellness.org) to make an auction item donation.

## Great Science

New and exciting research has continued to support our mission. In fall 2008, we began talks with a series of talented and accomplished scientists and researchers in the cancer world. Yale epidemiologist **Melinda Irwin** generously keeps us apprised of the latest research, including her own groundbreaking studies of cancer and exercise.

**Eve Ellis** of the Komen organization in New York, her spouse, Broadway producer **Annette Nientzow**, and **Mitchell Kline**, a New York dermatologist in private practice, are lending invaluable assistance as well. Similarly supportive, and highly regarded in their fields, are **Anil Rustgi, MD**, Chief of the Division of Gastroenterology at the University of Pennsylvania, and **Susan Baserga, MD**, professor of Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry, Genetics, and Therapeutic Radiology at Yale University.

We are also blessed with the expertise and advice of **Craig Henderson, MD**, Adjunct Professor of Hematology/Oncology at UC San Francisco. Craig is a distinguished scientist and a recognized leader in breast cancer research.