

News

Cancer Survivors Find Support at Fitness Unlimited

By Kathy Kurtz Ferrari
Staff Writer

Fitness Unlimited is a place where you can find some of the most health-conscious women in town. Located at 364 Granite Ave., it has become a mainstay in East Milton Square for females who enjoy feeling the burn.

It is also becoming a sought-out destination for a very special group of women who have a different purpose when they step through the door.

Women who have fought their way back from cancer have found a caring community of support there, as part of a network called Cancer Community Renewal Project. The project, founded 10 years ago by cancer survivor Carol Lundin, offers compassionate support for women in the community who are coping with a cancer diagnosis. Working with a network of volunteers, the nonprofit organization offers therapy, counseling, personal training, nutrition tips and other services to cancer survivors and their caregivers.

Lundin, who is also a member of the club, was able to partner with Fitness Unlimited for the project due to the interest and support of club owner Paul Maduri, manager Beth Whitney and cancer exercise specialist Laury Hale.

"The purpose of Cancer Community Renewal Project is to do fund-raising in the community and then to give the money back to the community, in terms of services," said Hale, who works closely with the project. "So it's a very direct link, which is so important."

Hale, along with trainer Maureen Conlon, who is also a massage therapist, organizes the Cycle Club at Fitness Unlimited, which holds fund-raising bike rides in and out of the club to support services for women who are cancer survivors and their caregivers. Since October, the Cycle Club has held monthly, open two-hour rides for those wishing to make a \$10 donation. The money is then used to purchase services that are given to the cancer patients. The group recently used funds to give massages by Conlon to a cancer survivor and her caregiving mother.

The cycling group is part of Cancer Community Renewal Project's "We Will Because We Can" team that organizes bikes and hikes to raise money for services given to cancer patients. They are currently planning a major event for Sunday, June 6, which is National Cancer Survivors Day. The team will be biking and hiking up Blue Hill to raise funds and awareness for the cause.

"It's a way to use fitness and wellness services and



Taking part in the recent cancer fund-raising ride with the Cycle Club at Fitness Unlimited are, from left, Carol Lundin, Maureen Conlon and Laury Hale. (Photo by Ann Issner)

experiences as a way to become more aware of supporting people who have had the diagnosis as well as never to get the diagnosis. Fitness is our vehicle," Hale said.

Hale herself deals directly with eight clients at Fitness Unlimited who are cancer survivors – she prefers the word "survivor" to "patient," no matter what stage her client may be – some newly out of medical treatment and some who have been in remission for a few years. As a personal trainer with cancer specific training, she is able to tailor exercise and support to the individual needs of her clients.

Cancer clients do not need to belong to Fitness Unlimited to receive services from the project, but many do. The Cycle Club's recent ride Jan. 22 added funds for the project, and raffled off a dinner party for six people to one of the biking participants, provided by Milton resident Connie Spiros. Host of the Milton cable television cooking show "Meet Me in the Kitchen," she is starting to spread the word on how nutrition and cancer wellness are linked. Her show will feature healthy cooking for cancer survivors in February, with Hale and Conlon scheduled to be guests.

"It's amazing, in this little community, [that] when you start doing a little outreach, you find these people who are doing all this," Hale added. "We're delighted to be finding each other and trying to see how we bring

a message of fitness and wellness out there, because we know there are people out there."

Fitness Unlimited has become a cog in the network for cancer survivors to find these services in our community.

And while Hale is inspired by the larger events, such as the Making Strides Breast Cancer Walk and other national fund-raisers, she believes helping a local woman is more satisfying.

"This is our little world. These are our people who we're taking care of," Hale said.

One resident who sings the praises of Hale – and of Fitness Unlimited's registered dietitian, Ginger Hoffman – is Kim Madigan, a cancer survivor who was featured in the Milton Times last month. Madigan's drastic double mastectomy left her thin, weak and in need of help getting back in shape.

"They changed my life," Madigan said with her trademark enthusiasm. "They are kind, and they listened to me. ... We are lucky to have them here in town."

Lundin and Hale are hoping to add to the network of support, as they continue to raise awareness for the cause.

For more information on receiving or providing services, visit the Cancer Community Renewal Project's Web site, www.cancer-renewal.org, or call Hale at (617) 698-0260, ext. 40.