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## **THE WELLNESS COMMUNITY AND GILDA'S CLUB WORLDWIDE ANNOUNCE HISTORIC MERGER**

*The Wellness Community and Gilda's Club Unify as Cancer Support Community to  
Provide Support for All People Affected by Cancer*

(WASHINGTON, DC) — The headquarters offices of **The Wellness Community** and **Gilda's Club Worldwide** unveiled their new, combined identity at a landmark "Cancer Summit" on Saturday, November 7, 2009. The new name, **Cancer Support Community**, was announced during the last day of the leadership conference of the combined organizations in Washington, DC.

As the number of cancer survivors in the United States surpasses 12 million, the demand for support services throughout the continuum of care is increasing. The **Cancer Support Community** is poised to help meet these needs through their innovative and comprehensive offerings to those affected by cancer. Affiliates of the **Cancer Support Community** will continue to offer their renowned education and support services without any disruption.

"We are the same great organization dedicated to ensuring that no one faces cancer alone," says Kimerly Hinkelman, executive director at **The Wellness Community of Philadelphia**, one of the long-established affiliates of the **Cancer Support Community**. "We look forward to being a part of what will likely be the largest professionally-led network of cancer support in the world, and to developing new and improved resources."

Both **The Wellness Community**, which was founded in 1982, and **Gilda's Club Worldwide**, started in 1992, share a common belief that emotional support is as essential as medical care for those diagnosed with cancer. This belief is supported by the 2007 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report entitled, "Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: Meeting Psychosocial Health Needs," which says that today's cancer care does not adequately address the emotional, social, spiritual, or financial challenges associated with the disease. The report goes on to state that community-based organizations are a crucial part of the health care delivery system and need to be better incorporated into the continuum of care. The **Cancer Support Community** is focusing on advancing the ideas of this IOM report.

Kim Thiboldeaux, president and CEO of **The Wellness Community**, has assumed executive leadership of the newly combined organization and is maintaining the title of president and CEO. There is a single national board of directors drawn from both **The Wellness Community** and **Gilda's Club Worldwide**. This board is led by former chair of the board of **The Wellness Community**, Chuck Scheper, and former chair of the board of **Gilda's Club Worldwide**, Laura Wheat.

Kimerly Hinkelman comments on what the merger means to local area affiliates: “We want to assure our local communities that they continue to be our top priority. Participants have come to rely on programs and services that meet their needs. We will not waver from our commitment to offer quality programs that look and feel the same to them, with exciting new opportunities coming as well. Donors can be assured that gifts to local **Wellness Community** affiliates will directly fund them, helping their staff to meet the needs of local cancer survivors. Finally, we will continue to work with community partners to strengthen networks of services and rely on them to help spread the word about these positive changes in the organization. In other words, the way local constituents have related to local area **Wellness Communities** in the past will not change.”

The new partnerships between local **Wellness Communities** and **Gilda’s Clubs Worldwide** create a widespread region consisting of:

- Ten communities
- Five states (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Northern Virginia)
- 34 full-time and 17 part-time staff persons
- 156 board members
- \$5,171,192 in financial resources invested annually this year in serving people with cancer
- 42,200 square feet of physical space
- 9,500 individuals served this year alone

This new union creates a strong, vital, global network that will bring the highest quality cancer support for the millions of people touched by cancer. These offerings include a comprehensive menu of personalized and essential services, including support groups, counseling, education and healthy lifestyle programs.

“As a cancer survivor, I understand the emotional and social impact of this disease,” says Ted Kennedy, Jr., chair of **Cancer Support Community’s** honorary board. “So does the **Cancer Support Community**. The organization’s work is critical as it helps optimize patient care by providing essential but often overlooked services that complete the cancer care plan. From my perspective, the marriage of these two respected organizations marks one of the most significant events in the cancer nonprofit community this year,” continues Kennedy.

The **Cancer Support Community** is now the largest employer of psychosocial oncology mental health professionals in the United States. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the organization includes a network of nearly 50 local **Gilda’s Clubs** and **Wellness Community** centers worldwide, more than 100 satellite locations, and online support services that extend around the world. Visit [www.cancersupportcommunity.org](http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org) for more information about the **Cancer Support Community**.

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The mission of **The Wellness Community of Philadelphia (TWCP)**, a **Cancer Support Community** affiliate, is to help people affected by cancer enhance their health and well-being through participation in a free professional program of emotional support, education, and hope. **TWCP** offers programs at Ridgeland in Fairmount Park and limited off-site programs in Chester County, the Bux-Mont area, Hahnemann University Hospital, and throughout Philadelphia. Please call **The Wellness Community of Philadelphia** at (215) 879-7733, (888) 819-3553, or visit **TWCP’s** website at [twcp.org](http://twcp.org) for more information. Reminder: **The Wellness Community of Philadelphia's** grounds and buildings are smoke-free.