

# What's Happening at Pathways!

## Volunteer Spotlight on Annette Nekoukar "I Get More Than I Give"

On any Tuesday afternoon during the Pathways Cooks' series, you can find Annette Nekoukar in The Connection's kitchen alongside other dedicated volunteers preparing wholesome meals for women with cancer. When asked how she felt about this experience, she exclaimed, "I love it! I get more than I give."

Annette is a 10-year breast cancer survivor. Her sister died of breast cancer at a young age. Her mother also had breast cancer but survived. After retiring as a teacher, Annette, so grateful that she overcame this disease, decided she wanted to "give back". She tried volunteering at hospitals, "but nothing felt right". One day she overheard two women in her exercise class say "See you later at Cooks!" When she asked the women where they were going, they told Annette about Pathways Cooks, where they prepared meals for women undergoing cancer treatment and



their families.

Annette inquired about volunteering and Ann Karr, Pathways Cooks coordinator, welcomed her to "come on board right away". "I was meant to be there," Annette explained. "It is the perfect thing for me to do."

The first time Annette participated in the kitchen, she was asked to make the desserts, and she was thrilled. She loves to bake. Now, she is the "official" dessert maker.

Annette is so impressed by the volunteers' teamwork. "I have never seen a group of women work so well together - like a well-oiled machine. I love the ladies there! Ann is incredible. She is respectful of everyone and makes it a delightful experience for all the volunteers."

Thank you, Annette, and to all the Pathways Cooks volunteers for all you do to help women with cancer.

To volunteer as a cook or driver delivering meals for our Pathways Cooking series, please contact Lesley Andrews or Ann Karr at [pathways@theconnectiononline.org](mailto:pathways@theconnectiononline.org) or (908) 273-4242, ext. 154.

## Pathways Programs Making a Difference to Women with Cancer

### WELLNESS

#### Therapeutic Yoga

Free to women with a history of cancer. Manage stress while increasing strength. Tuesday evenings 6:30 -7:30pm, Saturday mornings 9:00-10:00 am.

#### Pathways Team SOS of New Jersey-Dragon Boat

All female cancer survivors and their supporters are welcome. Practices at 6pm on Monday on Lake Parsippany. Enjoy the benefits of low impact exercise while participating in a floating support group. No experience is necessary. 22 of the Team members are traveling to Florence, Italy to participate in the International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission this July!

### EDUCATION

#### Women's Cancer Teaching Project

Trained breast and gynecological cancer survivors (Patient Educators) are empowered by sharing their cancer experiences with doctors and students in the medical field, helping enhance patient-centered humanistic care.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

#### Pathways Cooks

Cancer survivors and community volunteers prepare and deliver delicious, nutrient rich, whole foods meals to women undergoing cancer treatment and their families. Application submission required. Drivers are needed for this program!

### SUPPORT

#### Pathways Financial Assistance Fund

This Fund provides limited aid to pay bills for women undergoing cancer treatment who are under or uninsured or who demonstrate financial need. Application submission is required.

#### Support Groups

If you are interested in joining a breast or gynecological cancer support group, please contact Lesley Andrews at Pathways.

For more information on all Pathways Programs call 908.273.4242 ext 154  
Email: [Pathways@theconnectiononline.org](mailto:Pathways@theconnectiononline.org) Visit: [TheConnectionOnline.org](http://TheConnectionOnline.org)

**Please donate now to support these necessary programs!**

## Visions of Hope Exhibit Comes to The Connection!



**Accomplished artist and breast cancer survivor, Susan H. Schaffer, will display her artwork from her Visions of Hope Exhibit at The**

**Connection. Come see her magnificent and poignant portraits of cancer survivors. Most of the portraits are of our very own Pathways members. The exhibit will take place in the Spring, date to be determined. To get a glimpse of Susan's awe-inspiring artwork, visit her website at [Seoul2SoulArtStudio.com](http://Seoul2SoulArtStudio.com).**

## PATHWAYS

Support, Education and Wellness  
for Women with Cancer

The Connection | 79 Maple Street | Summit, NJ 07901  
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(click "Donate Now" & select Pathways Women's Cancer Support)

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## Mission

### PATHWAYS DIRECTOR

Lesley Andrews

*Pathways*, a program of The Connection, provides educational resources and ongoing support for women with cancer, creating a community in which shared experiences lead to personal growth and healing.

# PATHWAYS

SPRING 2018

## "GATHER TO GIVE" FUNDRAISER SMASHING SUCCESS!



Pictured: Lesley Andrews, Ann Karr, Wendy Graeb, Gerri Madsen, Nora Radest, Virginia Cepeda, Marianne Suffern, Mary Ann Moore and Julie Lanzone

Pathways and The Connection are still celebrating Pathways' most successful fundraiser to date. In the fall, six events were held by thirteen gracious individuals committed to helping raise funds and awareness for Pathways. These hosts opened their hearts and homes, and invited their communities to participate, support, and contribute. Their efforts educated hundreds of attendees about our important services and programs, and \$34,000 was raised!

Rebecca Michalopoulos and Denise Kelly co-hosted "Brunch and Bubbly" and "Sip and Shop" events where attendees previewed the 2017 Ellie Kai Fall Collection. Virginia Cepeda and Julie Lanzone held a brunch reception. Virginia commented, "It was wonderful to gather together and gain understanding about the important work Pathways does each and every day for women in our community."

Mary Ann Moore and Allison Anderson were pleased to host an event. "What a delight it was to have such a wonderful group of women to my home for the Pathways event," Mary Ann shared. "To come together for such a worthwhile and important cause made the evening that much more special. I had dear friends benefit tremendously from the support groups, dinners delivered and expertise shared by Pathways."

Nora and Rob Radest co-hosted a wonderful dinner reception with Rob Densen, who touchingly conveyed that the most wonderful person he has ever known, his wife, Barbara, loved receiving Pathways Cooks meals before she passed away from cancer. Rob said she felt nourished and cared for, and the entire Densen family also shared how they had enjoyed Pathways Cooks' savory meals with their mom.

Gerri and Dick Madsen have a special place in their hearts for Pathways. "Having worked at Pathways, I have seen first-hand the difference the programs make in the lives of the women they serve and their families," Gerri said. "We were happy to celebrate Pathways' many accomplishments and raise awareness for this special program."

Passionate Pathways supporters Marianne Suffern and Wendy Graeb hosted a lively World Series-themed event, where their guests not only enjoyed learning more about Pathways, but shared their own experiences supporting friends and family during their cancer journeys.

Thank you, Gather to Give hosts! As the needs of our programs are far greater than the generous donations we receive, these successful Pathways Gather to Give fundraisers are all the more special and appreciated.

Not Pictured: Allison Anderson, Rob Densen, Denise Kelly, Rebecca Michalopoulos, Rob Radest and Dick Madsen

### Attention!

To continue to get our Bi-yearly newsletter with news and updates about all Pathways programs, we need your help!

Email: [pathways@theconnectiononline.org](mailto:pathways@theconnectiononline.org). This is our last printed Pathways Provider!

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# Through a Survivor's Eyes

Ivana Radoicic



I am determined to stay positive!

In June 2016 I felt a lump in my breast. It hurt. I googled the symptoms and the word "cancer" popped up. I shrugged it away. I have never been ill in my life and hadn't seen a doctor in years. My mom told me to follow a proven Eastern European topical remedy. Despite following her instructions, a week later I was diagnosed with stage three/borderline stage four breast cancer. My whole life was turned upside down.

As I was coming to terms with my diagnosis (I couldn't get myself to say the word "cancer"), I kept thinking of my 1 1/2 and 5-year-old children. The most difficult thing for my husband and me was to convey the news to our older daughter; the younger one was luckily oblivious. We decided to be open with our older daughter. We read her a book about a girl whose mom got cancer, and we told her that, while there will be some physical changes like hair loss, the medicine would make me healthy again. We reassured her we were going to get through it.

I started chemotherapy right away, followed by a unilateral mastectomy and 25 radiation treatments. I was very lucky to have a wonderful support system - my family and friends were truly amazing. My husband drove me to every treatment and appointment, and my mother stayed with us to care for the children. I don't think I could have done it otherwise.

I was also very fortunate to be introduced to Pathways. I was a recipient of the wonderful meals prepared by Pathways Cooks. Pathways Cooks was a huge help for my family and me because we were going through such a difficult time.

I resumed working full-time in April 2017. The doctors were very happy with the results of my treatment. I had made a full recovery. I felt great, and it was truly remarkable to have my life back again! That summer we had a blast in Europe as we visited family with our older daughter.

However, in October I started having persistent headaches. I took over-the-counter medicines but nothing helped. An MRI revealed a brain metastasis. I was shocked. It wasn't supposed to happen this way. I had successful brain surgery, followed by the gamma knife. We consulted the leading experts on brain metastasis to determine the best treatment plan for me. I am very fortunate to have such wonderful family! I am determined to stay positive and do whatever I can to sway the odds in my favor and defeat this disease.

# From the Director

Lesley Andrews



Dear Pathways Friends,

Gratitude is empowering. In 2003, I was introduced to Pathways through a support group after being diagnosed with breast cancer. I was so thankful to be part of a group that helped me survive a very difficult journey. Today I find that I am grateful to have much more involvement in this outstanding program. Pathways helps countless women in our community who are facing cancer and those who have completed treatment.

This year, the outpouring of support for and dedication to Pathways, elevated my gratitude to a new level. This past fall, six individual Gather to Give Pathways fundraising parties were hosted by thirteen dedicated Pathways supporters. The demonstration of generosity and kindness was truly extraordinary. When I reflected on the reason behind the immense level of support, I realized what sets Pathways apart from many other remarkable cancer-related organizations: **Pathways provides direct, FREE personal services to women with cancer or with a history of cancer at a time when they need it the most.**

When reading Ivana's powerful story, you can see how Pathways Cooks meals played a part in getting her through her cancer treatments. And, while reading the article about Cooks volunteer, Annette Nekoukar, on the back page of this newsletter, you will get a sense of how empowering it is to volunteer to help woman with cancer.

As the Director of Pathways, I am committed to continuing to seek the level of support we saw this past fall because the needs of our programs are greater than the generous donations we receive.

Warm wishes,

Pathways Director

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