



Peer Navigators met with students at the University of Louisville School of Medicine right before the shutdown, early 2020.

FRIEND FOR LIFE CANCER SUPPORT NETWORK NEWS

"I'm so glad I was able to find your organization because I've been scrambling to find support (the pandemic has made finding support groups tricky). I'm so thankful..." ~ B

2021: Volume 30



The only constant in life is change. ~ Heraclitus

2020 was certainly a year of change. Many of us experienced loss during the pandemic...the devastating loss of loved ones, loss of employment and income, loss of time spent with family and friends, loss of "normal," loss of a sense of control.

Cancer is also about loss and change.

A diagnosis changes your world so abruptly. When I was told I had cancer, I kept wishing I could transport myself back to the "before times" when life was (mostly) predictable. With cancer, there is no going back. That is true for any loss.

It is important to take time to grieve and honor your losses.

Gradually, you get back on your feet and face forward. One step at a time. The occasional misstep or pause. At best, it is a process of learning and growth. Learning about yourself, about your connections with others, about what is most important to you. Learning to accept change.

Throughout the pandemic, Friend for Life continued to provide peer support to many facing cancer, patients and caregivers. It is difficult to fathom the pain and fear of being diagnosed with cancer in a time when it was difficult to make a doctor's appointment and impossible for loved ones to accompany you.

Connecting with a Peer Navigator gave a voice of hope to many. Thanks to online training we have recruited, trained and interviewed over 40 new Peer Navigators since March 13, 2020.

Here's to facing forward and embracing change.

~ Judy Kasey Houlette, Executive Director

Welcome & Mission
PAGE 01

A New Chapter
PAGES 02-03

2020 Awardees
PAGE 04

In Remembrance
PAGE 04

Our Donors
PAGES 04-07

Our Mission:

To help persons diagnosed with cancer and their loved ones navigate the path through diagnosis, treatment and recovery by pairing them with a trained survivor of a similar experience so they can face cancer with someone who's been there.

friend4life.org

A New Chapter

Dear Friends,

Spring is a time of change and growth and hope. Somehow it seems fitting that this transition happens in the spring.

"All the feels" is how Judy and I continually describe what's happening. On Monday, March 29th, I left Friend for Life Cancer Support Network to start a new position.

It also seems fitting as March 28th marked Friend for Life's 32nd anniversary of incorporation as a nonprofit organization.

I began my time at Friend for Life as a graduate intern nearly 13 years ago. When I had the first meeting with the Leadership Louisville Center's *Ignite Louisville* team to learn about this intriguing local organization with a mission that just made sense: helping folks to face cancer with someone who's been there - I had no idea that I would still be here all these years later.

Honored is perhaps the best word to describe how I feel about my time employed with Friend for Life. Honored to be chosen to continue the mission. Honored to have spent time with each of you as you have shared your story of one of (if not the) most traumatic times in your lives. Honored that this work has made a difference in the lives of those facing cancer.

Judy has been a tremendous boss, mentor, and friend. We have laughed and cried together many times over the past 13 years with many of the tears in the last few weeks.

"I just love our volunteers." We say it all the time. This organization has put me in contact with the most incredible humans. You'll never know how grateful I am for each of you, whether you are a peer navigator, board member, or intern. Your kindness and your generosity mean the world to me.

I left my position as Assistant Director at Friend for Life to embark on a new adventure as Project Coordinator for a new initiative through Seven Counties Services. It is under the umbrella of the Crisis & Information Center, where I have also been for many, many years as a PRN crisis counselor. This new project is in collaboration with many partners throughout the city and the program we are building will divert some of the 911 calls to mental health services rather than police in hopes of providing a better fit for those in crisis.

This isn't goodbye; it's see you later. Please stay in touch.

With gratitude, *Nicole Guffey Wiseman*



Friend for Life staff 2020 (l-r): Nicole Guffey Wiseman, Landon Foster, Judy Kasey-Houlette



How do I write adequately about someone with whom I have shared so much these 13 years? My right-hand person. The other half of my brain. My partner in fighting cancer crime. Nicole has been a remarkable gift to this organization and to me, personally. She brought so much to this organization and I have learned so much from her. While I miss her incredibly as a part of Friend for Life's staff (we're still in touch daily as friends), I am thrilled that she has been selected for this new position and look forward to learning about the healing and positive change she'll continue to bring to our community. ~ Judy

Welcome, LB!

As a member of the Friend for Life Network for the last three years, Lori Beth “LB” Miller is excited to join the Friend for Life Team as the Assistant Director. Having served as a Peer Navigator and a Consumer Reviewer for the Breast Cancer Research Program in conjunction with the Department of Defense since 2018, Lori Beth not only brings her personal journey, but also experience working with volunteers, friend and fund-raising, and building networks and partnerships. In addition to Friend for Life, Lori Beth has served on the CHI Survivorship Leadership Council, the UK Camp Kesem Advisory Board, and as a patient representative for CHI St. Joseph. She launched the Bosom Buddies Support Group at her church and remains active with the TrailBlazers Support Group.



Lori Beth brings extensive experience in the field of education, where she streamlined operations to ‘meet individuals where they are,’ while fostering a more inviting and involved culture. Lori Beth prides herself in championing worthy causes while magnifying service to others. Lori Beth resides in Lexington, with her husband Brian. Among her many personal interests and achievements, Lori Beth is an avid fan of the outdoors and loves spending time on the water. She has been teaching self- defense courses for the last 18 years, where she loves to empower women. Most recently, she has been working on her yoga skills where she is learning to value the yoga mindset.

Lori Beth will be joining our team this summer and is eager to meet the outstanding members of this Friend for Life Network.

Thank You to Our Amazing Sponsors!



Awardees from *Quarantining with Friends 2020*



Simtechs received The Bramlette Award for Outstanding Support of Friend for Life Cancer Support Network by a Business Owners Mohammad and Pam Mahdavi, daughter Shahla and son Hassan pictured



The Sandmann Award for Outstanding Support by an Individual honored Amy Holthouser, MD and Charles Kodner, MD with the University of Louisville School of Medicine



The Bobbi Marrs Daniels Award for Outstanding Volunteer honored Blake Rosbury and Kathy Pullen (each pictured with someone as adorable as they are)



Do you have your Friend for Life t-shirt?



Available in red, blue and grey, sizes small to xxxl. \$25 includes shipping. [Order online](http://friend4life.org/contact/) (friend4life.org/contact/ with your selected size, quantity and color(s) in the Memo box, or send us an email: staff@friend4life.org



In Grateful Remembrance

We treasure fond memories of these beloved volunteers who passed away since publication of our last newsletter.



Kevin Bailey



Maurice Bason



Barbara Cunningham



Sharon Guthrie



Scott Kimbel



Pam Simonelli



Cheryl Sparks



Rebecca Stark



Zita Girdley

“She remarked how therapeutic it was for her mom to talk with/support others. I told her how many her mom had supported and the gratitude they expressed... Then we told each other how good it was to hear what we’d said.”

Thanks to All Who Support Friend for Life!

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“Sometimes as we travel life’s daily journey, a bend in the road comes along and we can’t see the straight path in front of us anymore. Our view is obstructed and sometimes it looks like the end. That’s what cancer feels like.

But sometimes around the bend the path that lies hidden beyond us is the best path to take after all. We don’t know what the road ahead holds until we take that first step of faith and move forward in strength that brings a brighter tomorrow. That’s what surviving cancer feels like.

Someone once told me when I was first diagnosed that “what God gives you on this journey is so much more than what cancer can ever take away.” That’s so very true.

Just some thoughts that I live by.

~ Monica Hodge,
 FFL Peer Navigator

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