

Friend for Life News

Comings and Goings

Normally, we have lots of photos to share about what we've been up to over the past year. However, the pandemic put a damper on that. So, grab a cup of your favorite beverage, settle in to a comfy chair and read this issue of the Friend for Life newsletter.

Friend for Life Cancer Support Network's first Director, Joan Steiner, used to include a section in the newsletter entitled "Comings and Goings." This section featured news of volunteers' travels, grandchildren, celebrations, and remembrances of those who passed on.

The recent pandemic brought sharp new meaning to comings and goings, impacting the lives of our volunteers and those we serve in a multitude of ways.

In this issue of the newsletter, we honor the spirit and lives of those we've lost and celebrate those still on this earth. Please read along...

Judy Kasey-Houlette
Executive Director

Best Wishes, Landon!



Landon Foster, pictured at left with Judy Kasey-Houlette, Nicole Wiseman and Jordan Bunch, joined Friend for Life in 2016 as an undergraduate at the University of Louisville School of Business. Landon eventually became Marketing Director for FFL, designing materials for fundraisers and our social media pages.

Now on the verge of receiving his MBA, Landon has moved on, serving as Ambassador Supervisor at [Lux Row Distillers](http://LuxRowDistillers.com). We can say, "We knew you when" Landon, and we are forever grateful to you, your service and ongoing support.



FRIEND FOR LIFE
CANCER SUPPORT NETWORK

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.



Contact us!

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(866) friend-4 Toll-free
www.friend4life.org
- Become a fan on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/friendforlifecsn)

LB's Briefing

As the Assistant Director, it has been a delight to learn about the founding and history of Friend for Life and the fabulous folks who serve endlessly as our Peer Navigators. Additionally, the opportunity to engage our extensive national network of partnering peer-matching and cancer support organizations has been enlightening. Learning to maximize national association resources from the latest cancer research to grant writing to niche support services continues to be beneficial.

Working in Lexington enables opportunities for strengthening current and developing new partnerships both with our non-profit partners, and medical institutions but also with educational and academic programs. Expanding marketing to increase the awareness of Friend for Life has been intentional throughout the region as well.

Collaborating with Board Members and Peer Navigators on plans for our Annual Evening with Friends Gala, Engaging and Serving our own Peer Navigators and being deliberate in thanking our sponsors and supporters, who enable us to do what we do, are just a few things on the horizon.

Although I have reached out to many of you, my hope is to connect with each of you to further introduce myself. However, if there is ever anything I can do for you at any point, please do be in touch (loribeth@friend4life.org). Take good care!



Lori Beth Miller, Assistant Director

A Priceless Gem



Two-time breast cancer survivor Ruby Gordon volunteered with Friend for Life Cancer Support Network for close to 20 years. Ruby was never off-duty, gathering items for the annual fundraiser even when on vacation, talking up the organization 24/7, even recruiting volunteers while doing water aerobics. Ruby had a true love of giving and a passion for the organization. Her husband Ronnie joined her, reluctantly at first, but they soon began speaking to a variety of groups about Friend for Life (see page 3) and were dubbed “Team Gordon” by yours truly. Ruby became a caregiver when Ronnie was diagnosed with lymphoma of the brain, a rare cancer that took his life in 2009.

Some time after Ronnie’s death, Simon “Si” Wolf became Ruby’s beau and joined her in support of the organization. Ruby’s tireless efforts raised much-needed funds, led to recruitment of dozens of volunteers, and ultimately ensured that many more people would face cancer with a Peer Navigator by their side.

Ruby was also instrumental in getting Friend for Life’s Clinical Conversations program off the ground. This program brings together first-year students at the University of Louisville School of Medicine and Friend for Life Peer Navigators to talk about the lived experience of cancer. The program began in 2007 and continues to this day, and has expanded to several other clinical programs.

One of the things I most admired about Ruby was that she was never petty towards others. I never heard her disparage another person for their personal attributes.

Without a doubt, Ruby’s legacy will live on.



FFL's Team Gordon: "We're here, we care and we're free."

For years Ruby and Ronnie Gordon spoke about Friend for Life to organizations, clubs, churches, anyone willing to schedule a speaker. Ruby sent follow-up emails to describe these experiences, and quite often her sense of humor shone through. Here are a select few from two full binders of emails.

"I did make a friend of an 83-year-old lady who said she only came to the meetings once a year, and did not know anyone there. She said she wanted to party, and did I know how she could get a drink. I said there was a bar outside the room, but she said there was no bartender. She said she could provide her own drink if I could get her a glass with ice. With some difficulty, I was able to get her ice, and she pulled out of her purse a small bottle of liquor. I, indeed, made a "friend for Life."



"Before we spoke they had a so-called exercise activity, and we got up and danced to Elvira. Ronnie got a woman to dance with him so he went into the 'dog house' for the rest of the day!!"

"These 7 am meetings are our VERY FAVORITES. And if you believe that, we have a bridge that goes to nowhere to sell to you."



Ronnie: "Monday, we went to a bar called P-Nut. We met with a business networking group called "To the Top Networking." Ruby thought the name was "Topless Networking." They corrected her but are now thinking of changing the name."

"By volunteering for FFL, I have many friends and it is wonderful. I certainly did not want cancer, but since I had it anyway, I am glad that I found out about FFL and I am happy to volunteer for you as you do wonderful things to help people go through cancer."

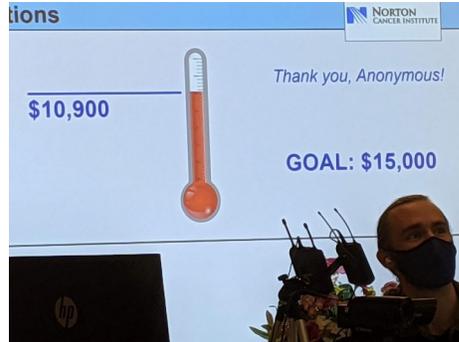
"...there was a booth where children and adults could ride large stuffed animals that moved through the mall by pushing a button. The man running this offered to let Si & I ride them free in order to tell people in the mall that adults ride them. We did it, and then I approached him to give a donation to FFL [for the fundraising auction] so that children & adults who bid the highest bid could ride them thru Mall St. Matthews"

"I know you have a lot of emails from me today. Sometimes I think we make a lot of work for you, but isn't it fun?"
~ Your FFL, Ruby



Quarantining with Friends 2021

Click [here](#) to view the recording on YouTube!



Friend for Life Cancer Support Network had one of our most successful fundraisers last August, raising just over \$60,000! We could not have done this second virtual event without the amazing support of our Board of Directors, and technical/production wizardry provided by [RFX Technologies](#).

Do you have a Friend for Life tee?

Look fantastic, be comfortable and support a great cause. Get a Friend for Life t-shirt for \$30 (includes shipping). Just let us know how many, what color(s) and what size(s).

Colors shown at right: blue, grey, red
Sizes S through XXXL

Order online: <http://bidpal.net/fflswag>

Friend for Life volunteers get one tee FREE!

Don't have one? Let Judy know!

You can also order by calling or emailing us:

staff@friend4life.org

502.893.0643

On the back of the tee:

"Facing cancer, with someone who's been there."



Rules of the Porch

Debbie Goldstein, [1955-2022] FFL volunteer since 2014

The world would be a better place if everyone could spend a day on my front porch. You could learn everything you need to know about tolerance, love, and kindness by watching my veranda for just one day.

It all started when I became disabled, and my husband planted a garden in our front yard so I would have something to look out at while I was housebound. The birds and squirrels soon learned that we had a little wildlife sanctuary in our front yard, and we now have dozens of species of wild birds that visit our porch feeders. Recently we started getting neighborhood cats that wanted food and affection, but they also began to hunt the squirrels and birds. While I am a cat lover, I had to make a decision. Do I keep encouraging the cats to come visit? Or should I discourage them so they would leave my wild friends alone?

I decided to choose option three. I went outside and had a serious discussion with the cats. I told them that if they wanted to keep coming to see me, they had to get along with all of the other animals. I'm not sure if they understood a word I said, but maybe on some deep level, they sensed my feelings and knew they needed to stop their hunting activities. They stopped chasing the birds and squirrels, and all of the other animals that now visit my porch. What happened after that has become a legend in our neighborhood.

On a typical day, we have up to nine or ten cats that come to our porch. Some of them have homes and just come to visit, have a snack, and get attention. Some of them are homeless, and the only food they get is on my porch. We put out an automatic food dispenser, along with fresh water. There is also a cat tower for them to climb on, a bench with pads for napping, and a covered cat bed.

So, at any given time, there are cats on my porch – and then the miracle happens. While cats are sleeping on the bench, there will be a squirrel right next to them eating nuts. Birds eat seeds at the bird feeders and from the tray I have on the porch, while cats watch them passively. At night, we have opossums and raccoons that come to eat, with cats lying on the bench only a foot away from them. Last week an opossum and a raccoon were eating together out of the food dispenser! They know the cats are there, and the cats know the wild animals are there – but they leave each other alone, and indeed, they all act like they are friends. My mother says they all sense they are in a “safe zone,” a haven where they know they will not be harmed.

Last week we started getting new visitors – four chickens found me and came to the porch to have a snack. Since then, they have been coming every day, and they seem to get along just fine with the cats, the squirrels, and the other birds. I bought some cracked corn for the “ladies,” but they seem to love eating out of the food dispenser.

Think about this for a minute: there are cats, squirrels, birds, raccoons, opossums, and chickens, all coming to my porch for food and love. They all know – somehow – that they have to get along. I am a realist and understand the nature of animals, and I recognize how amazing this is. They are all fighting their basic instincts to be together in one place, without fighting and enmity. Our neighbors are in awe of all of this, and often stop by to make comments about it.

I have always loved animals, and they seem to love me. My daughters say the animals call me “Grandma,” because I treat them like my family, and they seem to find me, especially when they need help. I feel so protective of my wards, as I experience the surreal drama that unfolds each and every day. I give them my love – and they give it back to me tenfold.

It started as a joke, but I wrote out “The Rules of the Porch,” a list I made up of how the animals should behave when they visit. But the more I read The Rules, the more I understand that they apply to the whole world. My little porch is a perfect example of how life can be good, and how everyone can get along and treat each other the way they should be treated.

I wish I could feed everyone who is hungry, and help all those who need help - both animals and humans. I wish that everyone in the world would take the time to encourage kindness and respect. But in the meantime, I will keep watch over the miracle that happens at my house every day. I will keep trying to pass on what I have learned, and teach the rest of the world the Rules of the Porch.

The Rules of the Porch

Everyone gets along on the porch.

Everyone gets treated with respect on the porch, regardless of age, species, or breed.

We welcome all colors of fur and feathers.

Share the food with everyone, so that those in need will get fed.

Don't pee on the porch, and don't leave a mess if you can help it.

And always remember: Grandma loves you!

Upcoming Events and Opportunities: Mark your calendars!

[Kentucky Gives Day: May 10, 2022—online, ALL DAY!](#)

An Evening with Friends 2022—our first hybrid event! Saturday, August 27, 2022

Give for Good Louisville: September 15, 2022—online, ALL DAY!

The 2022 Friend for Life Cancer Support Network Board of Directors

Jason Howard, Chair
Karen Donahue, Treasurer
Jordan Bunch
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David Collins
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Jim Gaffney
Tara Gnau
Tom Jecker
Ann S. Jones
Angie Malone
Colette McCoy
Kristen Mellinger
Laura Mitchell
JoAnne Morris
Ben Ruley
Janell Seeger
Kenya Whitfield



Look familiar?
We are hopeful the
Friend for Life
Cancer Support
Network Board
meetings will
return to in-person

In Grateful Remembrance

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



Ralph Hughes



Ruby Gordon



Simon Wolf



Debbie Goldstein



Gena Bigler



Sid Roseberry



Cathy White



Lara MacGregor

What We've Been Up To...

Friend for Life volunteers are cancer survivors and caregivers trained by healthcare professionals to prepare them to support others as they confront the emotional, psychological and practical uncertainties posed by cancer. We refer to our volunteers as Peer Navigators. Support seekers are matched with Peer Navigators by diagnosis, course of treatment and, to the extent possible, age and gender. No other organization in our region offers matched one-to-one support for all types of cancer. At the end of 2021, Peer Navigators numbered 420. They range in age at diagnosis from 6 to 84 and represent survival of a wide range of cancer types.

During 2021, Friend for Life Cancer Support Network:

- * Staff responded to 1,379 requests for support and matched 429 individuals
- * Peer Navigators donated over 5,500 hours
- * Peer Navigators spoke with over 150 students and their faculty mentors at the University of Louisville School of Medicine. Peer Navigators have shared the cancer patient perspective with over 6,600 future healthcare practitioners since 2007.
- * Staff partnered with other one-to-one cancer support organizations across the country in order to provide peer support for persons diagnosed with rare forms of cancer or recently developed treatments

Friend for Life seeks to:

- * continue to provide cost-free peer support to persons diagnosed with cancer and to their loved ones.
- * continue to provide quality training and ongoing support and education to volunteers.
- * enhance outreach to minority and underserved populations, with special focus on Kentucky.
- * reflect advances in cancer knowledge and treatment through ongoing recruitment of survivors who have benefited from these advances.

“Thank you very much.

**You may never know just how much what you do means.
Blessings to each of you.”**

~ Ann, former support seeker, current Peer Navigator

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**Show Friend for Life Cancer Support network some love by donating
to Friend for Life during Kentucky Gives Day: May 10, 2022!**

<https://www.kygives.org/organizations/friend-for-life-cancer-support-network>