

# Friend for Life News

## Time for Change

It's funny where life leads you.

Thirty years ago at the age of 37, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I would never have dreamed that this diagnosis would lead to a role with an amazing nonprofit organization, and the most fulfilling career I could imagine. Now, after over 25 years, it is time for me to step down as director, a truly bittersweet experience.

My work with Friend for Life has been a gift. I have learned so much, grown through many challenges, and—the best part—come to know and love so many remarkable people. I remain especially grateful to Founders Phil Bramlette and Chuck Sandmann, as well as to Judy Hubbs Sisk, for creating Friend for Life...A Cancer Support Network 37 years ago, and to my predecessor Joan Steiner. Among the many blessings this organization has brought to my life, it is the people that mean the most.

*The peer-to-peer connection is a remarkable relationship that brings people together through shared experience, and can span thousands of miles, making this world a closer, more connected place.*

Thanks to supporters like you, the organization has grown during my tenure. Our growth has not happened at lightning speed, nor are we topping Fortune 500 charts. Rather, we've grown in *people*, and in the depth and breadth of support we provide. Our volunteer numbers have grown from around a dozen to over 400 currently active Peer Navigators. And, if you consider the women and men we have lost over the years, these numbers would be in the thousands. Those who have received peer support number in the tens of thousands over these 37 years. We now offer support for caregivers and have Peer Navigators from across the US and in a handful of other countries. Our Assistant Director lives in Lexington and our Board of Directors has representatives from the University of Kentucky/Markey Comprehensive Cancer Center and Appalachian Regional Healthcare.

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### FRIEND FOR LIFE

#### CANCER SUPPORT NETWORK

#### OUR MISSION

To help adults 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:

• [staff@friend4life.org](mailto:staff@friend4life.org)  
(502) 893-0643 Phone  
(866) friend-4 Toll-free  
[www.friend4life.org](http://www.friend4life.org)

• Become a fan on  
[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/friendforlife)

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The peer to peer connection is a remarkable relationship that brings people together through shared experience, and can span thousands of miles, making this world a smaller, more connected place.

Our Board of Directors (the BEST people) has formed a Search Committee, and we are currently accepting applications. The position is posted on the Friend for Life website: <https://www.friend4life.org/executive/>

I will continue to be on hand as needed in the future and am excited to see where this remarkable organization goes over the coming years. My heartfelt thanks goes to all of you who have played a role in the life of Friend for Life Cancer Support Network.



Judy Kasey-Houlette  
Executive Director

## Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, May 13:** [Kentucky Gives Day](#)

**Saturday, August 23:** [An Evening with Friends 2025](#)

**May 21-23,** Our friends at [Reel Recovery](#) are hosting a fly-fishing retreat for men affected by any form of cancer. The event will be at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park in Kentucky. Apply online: [reelrecovery.org](http://reelrecovery.org). For more information, call 800-699-4490 or email [info@reelrecovery.org](mailto:info@reelrecovery.org)



## From LB's Corner of the Commonwealth

Greetings from Lexington, my Friends – I trust this finds you well and excited for Spring like me.

With just a few months into 2025, the outlook is bright and full of promise. We've had a strategic and inspiring half-day retreat with our wonderful board members—such a fantastic group! We've also begun plans for our annual Evening with Friends Celebration: it's Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> in Louisville and we would love for you to join us. Additionally, we're excited to forge new partnerships as we continue expanding our services to the eastern region of the Commonwealth, where cancer diagnosis rates remain unfortunately high. There's never a dull moment here!

As I communicate with support seekers daily, I'm continually inspired by the amazing people and colleagues dedicated to our mission. It's important to acknowledge that we wouldn't be where we are without you. Each of you has traveled a unique journey that equips you to make a difference for others. Your compassion truly sets you apart, and for that, we are immensely grateful!

As we welcome the newness of Spring, I hope you recognize the impact we are making together. Whether it's reaching more individuals and clinics, connecting with a new friend, or encouraging a referral for a peer navigator, every effort creates a ripple effect. As we make strides each day, please remember that if you need a Friend for Life poster for your fellowship hall or some informational rack cards to share in your community, club, or organization, just drop me an email or give me a call. I look forward to hearing from you!



Lori Beth Miller  
Assistant Director

# Reaching Rural 2024

Thanks to grant funding from Gilead Oncology and Pfizer Friend for Life staff spent much of 2024 connecting with medical providers and community organizations, and participated in events to expand our outreach to Eastern Kentucky. This region has among the highest cancer rates in the US, and limited support resources. Click on each image to link to the individual, program or event to learn more. Kudos to Peer Navigator **Shelly Wyman** for your skilled grant-writing!



[Eula Hall, Healthcare Champion](#)



[Appalachian Career Training in Oncology  
University of Kentucky  
Cohort 3 2022-2024](#)

[UK/Markey ACTION Program](#)



[Possumfest, Cumberland, KY](#)



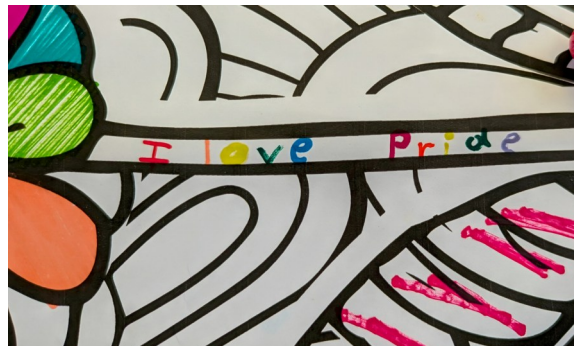
[MAMAW Festival, Harlan, KY](#)



[Possumfest, Cumberland, KY](#)



[Mural in Harlan KY by Lacy Hale](#)



[Pikeville Pride](#)



## What we've been up to....



### Digital Storytelling Project Presentation Markey Cancer Center Action Network Conference 12/2023

Four cancer survivors committed to an eight-week, online, digital storytelling and leadership development opportunity led by UK professor and cancer survivor Nicole Breazeale. Additional technical support and facilitation was provided by the Story Center. This project was developed in collaboration with KCC Survivorship Network's Nutrition and Physical Activity workgroup that includes the American Cancer Society, **Friend for Life Cancer Support Network**, the Kentucky Cancer Program and Kentucky Department for Public Health's State Nutrition and Physical Activity Program. Featured in this project were Peer Navigators **Angelo Vaccaro**, **Kristine Springler** and **Aquia Ware** (not pictured)


### Clinical Conversations 2025

Friend for Life Peer Navigators **David Shear Trick** and **Jodie Sharp** spoke with students enrolled in the University of Louisville's School of Medicine. The focus was on individuals with a genetic predisposition to developing cancer.



**Guinness World Record Attempt**  
Most Strikes in 24 Hours by a Team of 4


Trace Wiseman  
Steve Wiseman



Kyle Reed  
Erik Howard

Midnight to Midnight,  
Labor Day, Sep 2, 2024  
@ Kingpin Lanes

Fundraiser for Friend for Life  
Cancer Support Network  
Scan Here to Donate →



### Unexpected Fundraiser

Guinness Book of World Records winners Steve Wiseman, Trace Wiseman, Kyle Reed and Erik Howard held a fundraiser last August to support Friend for Life. Steve's daughter **Angie Smith** had once reached out to the organization for support.

## In Grateful Remembrance

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



Andrea Connors

Carol Kirby

Anna Irvin

John Doughty

Janice Tucker

Jim Hollis

Phyllis McGinnis

*“As a cancer survivor himself, he was an incredible support person for me during my own cancer treatment. I could share my fears and recovery issues with him in ways I could not with friends or family. He has practical advice for getting through the painful recovery period after treatment.”*

## Do you have a Friend for Life tee?

Look fabulous, feel 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 us 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.”*



# Introducing the 2025 Friend for Life Board of Directors

Pictured, left to right:  
 Raven Darko-Mensah  
 Bart Bushong  
 Judy Kasey-Houlette  
 Mary Dickman  
 Lori Beth Miller  
 Bob Cunningham  
 Kenya Whitfield  
 Robert Eger  
 Laura Mitchell  
 Kristen Mellinger

Not pictured:  
 Jonathan Boggs  
 Scott DeGaris  
 Karen Donahue  
 Aquia Ware



- Kristen Mellinger\***, Board President  
*Director, Underwriting and Policy Services, Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance*
- Mary Dickman\***, Treasurer  
*Strategic Project Manager, Baptist Health*
- Bart Bushong**, Nomination Committee Chair / President Emeritus  
*CEO, RFX Technologies*
- Jonathan Boggs**  
*Cancer Program Quality Assurance Coordinator, Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH)*
- Bob Cunningham**  
*Director of Pastoral Care, Chaplain, Retired, Baptist Health Louisville*
- Karen Donahue**, Immediate Past Treasurer  
*Vice President, Operations and Finance, Norton Cancer Institute & Norton Medical Group*
- Jason Howard**  
*Geron Corporation*
- Laura Mitchell, APRN**  
*Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Baptist Health Louisville*
- Scott DeGaris**  
*Territory Sales Manager, Inari Medical*
- Raven Darko-Mensah**  
*Social Worker Senior | Psych-Oncology Services  
 University of Kentucky Health Care/Markey Cancer Center*
- Robert Eger, III**  
*Fr. Raymond J. Treece Endowed Chairperson  
 Professor of Accounting, W. Fielding Rubel School of Business, Bellarmine University*
- Aquia Ware\***  
*Independent Realtor, Kentucky and Indiana*
- Kenya Whitfield**  
*Community Outreach Manager, Hosparus, Inc.*

**Staff**  
 Judy Kasey-Houlette, Executive Director    Lori Beth “LB” Miller, Assistant Director

**\* Also serves as a Peer Navigator**

Friend forLife  
 @Friend4LifeCSN



**venmo**

Scan this code to show  
 us some love



# An Evening with Friends 2024

Highlights from An Evening with Friends 2024



**Keynote Speaker Freddie Johnson**



**Peer Navigator Presenter & Board Member Aquia Ware**



**Bobbi Marrs Daniels Awardee  
Monica Hodge & daughter  
Stephanie Hodge**



**Sandmann Awardee Mary Dickman,  
Treasurer & Kristen Mellinger,  
Board President**



**Charcuterie Cones at VIP Hour  
Sponsored by Mark & Barb Lechner**



**Board Members Aquia Ware &  
Kenya Whitfield**

## Our Fabulous Sponsors



**NORTON  
CANCER INSTITUTE**



Friend for Life Cancer Support  
Network

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Louisville, KY 40207-4652

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## SAVE THESE DATES!



[Kentucky Gives Day: Tuesday, May 13](#)

Kentucky's 13th annual day of online giving  
#KYGives25



[An Evening with Friends 2025:](#)

[Saturday, August 23](#)

Annual fundraiser to support the Mission and  
Vision of Friend for Life Cancer Support  
Network. In person at the Audubon Country  
Club, Louisville, KY 40213