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New Gym for Cancer Survivors Opens in Beachwood

The Gathering Place's Richman Wellness Center offers space to recover, garner support

By [Susan Valerian](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 10, 2011 [Print](#)

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The road to recovery for cancer patients just got a little easier, thanks to the opening of the Richman Wellness Center.

The center, located on Commerce Park Road, is the newest addition to The Gathering Place, a nonprofit support center for cancer patients and their friends and family. It offers free fitness programs tailored to cancer patients undergoing treatments or recovering from them.

For Tracy Bauer, a 52-year-old breast cancer survivor from South Euclid, the wellness center has been a lifeline.

"Exercising at the center has lifted the fog from my brain," she wrote in an email. "It is the only thing that has helped me since I learned I had metastatic breast cancer."

She works out there twice a week and added that the people in her class have become like family.

Elizabeth Roth, an exercise physiologist who helps create fitness programs at the center, said exercise is critical in helping a cancer survivor deal with their illness and treatments.

"All the research is really pointing to using exercise to manage side effects of cancer," she said.

The center is open to men and women of all ages who are currently undergoing cancer treatment or are in post-treatment up to two years. It's not a drop-in place or a gym. All participants must get a note from their doctor to participate and complete a physical screening by the center's staff.

Each participant follows an individual program tailored to his or her abilities and needs. Many of the workouts incorporate the use of traditional fitness equipment such as treadmills, ellipticals and other cardio machines, along with free weights and resistance tools.

The overall design of the facility was overseen by The Gathering Place's fitness trainer, Stephen Cerne, and Roth. The goal is to meet the needs of those facing cancer and help them overcome cancer-related side effects, including fatigue, flexibility, mobility and balance issues.

Right now, the center offers 10 weekly classes and there are 10 to 12 participants per class. The small groups serve as built-in support systems, Roth said.

"What I hear a lot of participants say is that everyone [here] understands where I'm at in my journey," she said.

Roth said the center is also being used as a research tool to measure the impact of exercise on the physical and emotional health of cancer survivors. Some courses will be pilot classes designed with area physicians.

For example, one recent class was designed to help men recovering from prostate cancer build their strength. Bone strength, Roth said, is important for prostate cancer survivors. An upcoming class will be tailored to improving the fitness of black women with breast cancer.

The center was made possible because of donations from Fred Richman and his sons Stephen, Joel and Dennis. Their gift was made in loving memory of Fred's wife, Bunny, and his daughter, Debby, who have both passed away from different forms of cancer.

To learn more about The Gathering Place, visit www.touchedbycancer.org, or call 216-595-9546.

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