Fighting Cancer with Exercise
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Helping cancer patients regain their strength for life

Exercise during treatment reduces nausea and fatigue

Studies have shown both physiological and psychological benefits for cancer survivors

Group exercise decreases incidents of depression by more than 40%

People who participate in a structured exercise program can see improvements with sleep patterns and quality of life

Breast and colorectal cancer survivors who exercise have a greater than 50% lower risk of recurrence

Please help us by sponsoring a survivor.

To offer support please go to www.strengthforlifeNY.org and click “Donate” or send a check to

902 Constance Lane
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776

631 675.6513

www.strengthforlifeNY.org
Our Story Begins...

Strength for Life was founded in memory of a friend and mentor, Evelyn Knapp, who lost her battle with breast cancer at 40 years old in 2005. As an exercise physiologist, she spent her lifetime promoting exercise and proper nutrition and her motivation and dedication helped countless individuals to engage in a healthier lifestyle. After being diagnosed with breast cancer, she continued exercising throughout treatment. She would say it gave her a feeling of control in an uncontrollable situation. From there she made a new commitment to promote exercise for cancer patients so they, too, would experience the benefits. In 2005 she lost her battle with breast cancer. However, her mission was not lost. Our organization was formed in her memory so we may continue her work and make her vision a reality.

Soon after we became Certified Cancer Exercise Specialists we started speaking at cancer support groups to educate survivors on the benefits of incorporating exercise into the treatment plan. We quickly realized that people with cancer had no information on the proper way to train after surgery and during treatment. Outrageous medical costs associated with cancer treatment left little room for a personal trainer or gym membership for the majority of those diagnosed. Recognizing that need, we decided to apply our experience by starting a nonprofit organization to help educate the community on the benefits of adding an exercise program to their treatment and recovery plan and reducing the risk of certain cancer and recurrences.
Strength for Life (SFL) is a non-profit dedicated to providing free exercise programs designed to enhance the recovery process of persons with a cancer diagnosis throughout Long Island communities. Services provided include educating cancer patients, caregivers and the medical community on the benefits of incorporating exercise into the treatment regimen and its effect on reducing the risk of certain cancers and re-occurrences, and improving bodily functional activities. Programs are conducted by Certified Cancer Exercise Specialists in a group setting and held at accessible locations throughout Nassau and Suffolk counties. Over the past 6 years SFL has reached more than 1,000 patients and survivors.

SFL was founded by CEO Jacqui Errico and SVP Debra Hughes in 2007 with a mission to address the unmet recovery needs of cancer patients and survivors. SFL operates from a home office out of Port Jefferson, Long Island. Over the years, SFL has addressed the recovery and healing process of cancer patients and survivors throughout Long Island, by leading and participating in community events, conducting wellness retreats, and facilitating cancer support groups. SFL has established referral relationships with local academic medical centers to support those cancer patients and survivors that require exercise therapy. SFL will also provide access to education on healthy nutrition to improve the future well-being of its participants and that of the community. SFL now seeks to expand the access to exercise therapy to all cancer patients and survivors throughout Long Island.
Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2013 at Strength for Life, it was truly a year of celebration and transition, a year of progress and commitment. Most of all, it was another year for all of us associated with the Foundation to be able to work together toward the goal of inspiring, empowering and strengthening those who have been diagnosed with cancer.

Since our inception in 2007 we have grown to understand the needs of those who are living with cancer. We have discovered, by listening to our clients, the gaps that exist in care for cancer patients from the moment of diagnosis, to the last day of treatment and into survivorship with a “new normal” to adjust to. With the information we receive we continually adjust our programs to do our best to fill these gaps and keep our focus on enhancing quality of life during treatment and into survivorship.

Strength for Life was built on passion, commitment and trust. Using this as our moral compass, we believe that we will achieve our goal to help all cancer patients regain their strength for life. Our organization’s many achievements and successes over the past year would have been impossible without the support of our executive director, our board of directors, our volunteers and our donors. Their dedication, energy and compassion is extraordinary and makes this foundation thrive.

The members of our board and our executive director work hand in hand to assure transparency in operations and foster an atmosphere of excellence. We have learned many lessons through the years and these lessons are what will guide us in the future and allow the Foundation to grow. We thank you for your support and look forward to expanding our programs so we may assist as many people living with cancer as possible!

Sincerely,
Debra Hughes
Co - Founder, Strength for Life
April 2014 will mark the third anniversary of my cancer diagnosis. And I am feeling blessed: I am still here, and I have returned to being “myself” - something I never thought would happen. Thanks to Strength for Life and the remarkably courageous people I have come to know, to care for, and to lean on for emotional support, I am functioning as I did (maybe better than) prior to my illness.

March of 2011 was a turning point in the life of my family when my husband, was discovered to have five significant blockages in his heart. He underwent bi-pass surgery and then developed complications. He was in the critical care unit for almost two weeks where he fought pneumonia and c-dif. Upon his release from the hospital, he was taken to a rehab facility where he stayed for an additional three weeks. During this time I was diagnosed with a complex ovarian cyst and scheduled for surgery for the removal of both ovaries and fallopian tubes.

My surgery took place on April 7, 2011. All went well and I was home the same day. My relief, however, was short lived. One week later, the day my husband returned home after five weeks, I received a phone call telling me the final pathology reports from my surgery indicated ovarian cancer. Here were the matriarch and patriarch of our family, both seriously ill. How do I tell my husband, our six children, their spouses, and our fourteen grandchildren! Cancer is an horrendous and devious illness that impacts the entire family. The future.

That’s where “Strength for Life” made all the difference in the world. From the moment I walked into the first session, I felt as if I belonged. The group was and welcoming, sympathetic, and above all encouraging. They are all SURVIVORS...I needed to know it was a possibility. The group is living proof of positive living and reinforcement.

Strength for Life is so much more than an exercise class. It is a life affirming support network, where a cancer patient can get proof positive that recovery is possible. There are people who understand the difficulties of starting over and who care about your progress.

Strength for Life provides all of these. Since starting classes my tumor markers have dropped..my oncologist tells me to “keep doing what you’re doing”...and I will.
Testimonial’s received via Great Non Profits from Clients, Board Members and Volunteers

Empower, Inspire and Strengthen

Testimonial of client served (via Great Non Profits) class
I found out about Strength for Life from my daughter’s mother-in-law who saw an article in a hospital bulletin about it. I had just finished chemo 4 months earlier for ovarian cancer and although I was feeling better, I still felt weak and fatigued. I joined the class in Nassau County. It was a small group, but we all immediately bonded. Jacqui was a wonderful leader who really knows what she’s doing. She customized the exercises for those of us who couldn’t do the traditional methods. Her encouraging attitude enabled all of us participate and benefit from the exercises. When I started, I could barely do the exercises, but after a couple of more classes, I felt stronger and was able to do them. More importantly, it was not only exercise, but it turned into a support group. Even though we all have a serious illness, at no time was it ever sad. It was an upbeat and supportive environment and with lots of humor throughout each session. I am so thankful for Jacqui and for the wonderful people in my class. Thanks also to Strength for Life for this program and for the exercise ball, bands, and mat. It hardly gives me an excuse not to continue to exercises at home. This is such a worthwhile service. I hope it keeps on going and grows.

Testimonial of client served (via Great Non Profits) retreat and class
I am so fortunate to have shared a wonderful retreat with other women who share similar diagnoses. Strength for Life is a non-profit agency geared towards those who are directly effected from breast, ovarian and other cancers. The mission of Strength for Life says it all. Collectively through volunteers, survivors, and healing practitioners, we learn how to become strong mentally emotionally and of course physically. The spectrum of ages is no barrier when surrounded by love, support and unconditional acceptance. This organization is powerful and there is not one out there which compares. I am privileged to have taken part in the retreat which is filled with laughter, education, and practitioners who share a common goal, health and then the next step is, how do we get to there together!? I have also participated in the 8-week strength for life program. It was the first time since I worked out since surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. The instructor, Jaqui is pure motivation and she tailored the work outs so each and everyone of us was able to full participate given our ‘physical’ limitation. I highly recommend Strength for Life. Upward and onward we go!
Empower, Inspire and Strengthen

Testimonial’s received via Great Non Profits from Clients, Board Members and Volunteers

Testimonial of an active volunteer (via Great Non Profits)
Working with Strength for Life is an experience I would recommend for any volunteer. Everything that Jacqui and Debbie touch is filled with such love and genuine intent and you can’t help but be effected by it you work with them. Exercise classes and wellness weekends are packed with positive energy and empowerment. In addition, the opportunity to fund-raise outside of these events gives me the chance to share the Strength for Life story and increase awareness. I love knowing that the donations I receive have the potential to make a profound impact on the lives of participants. I have enjoyed each volunteer experience with Strength for Life and look forward to giving more, in any way I can, in the future.

Testimonial of a Board Member (via Great Non Profits)
My name is Teresa Doherty and I am a breast cancer survivor. I attended strength for life’s 1st weekend wellness retreat and I was blown away at what they had to offer to cancer patients and survivors at NO COST. It was a weekend filled with peace, love and compassion. Debbie and Jaqui and all the others who gave their time that weekend were amazing in making me feel inspired, strengthened and empowered. I now understand why that is their mantra. It was exactly what at needed in my healing journey at that time. I was so impressed with their mission and what they offered to cancer patients that I knew I had to get involved. I wanted to pay it forward and help others like myself get the information about complimentary therapies and experience them first hand so I asked to help out at the following retreats doing Reiki, which I am certified. The rest is history... I now have my husband involved with fundraising and also he is the entertainment at the yearly SFL “Rockin FunRaiser”. I am proud to say I am a Board Member and totally dedicated to helping this amazing organization help many other cancer patients!

Testimonial of a Donor/Volunteer (via Great Non Profits)
Although I am reviewing Strength for Life as a donor, I have also been a volunteer at their annual runs and I would assure anyone reading this that Jacqui and Debbie, the co-founders of Strength for Life, are both extremely passionate about their work with cancer patients and survivors. Additionally, I am confident that Jacqui and Debbie are excellent stewards of each donation that they receive and anyone considering a donation to Strength for Life be assured that their donation will help Strength for Life provide services to the greatest number of individuals possible.
Volunteers are Appreciated

As we grow and develop Strength for Life, we are constantly looking for more people to join our Volunteer Team and help us reach even more cancer patients and survivors. Volunteers make what we do possible. The work they do is important and rewarding. Special folks willing to lend a hand and mind to our cause are needed for a variety of tasks.

Volunteer Opportunities at Strength For Life

Outreach: Volunteers are needed to be “Champions” for Strength For Life. Volunteers will help increase visibility by developing relationships with organizations. Volunteers are needed to set up, clean up and represent at various health fairs.

Special Event Support: Strength For Life holds many fundraising events through the year. These are fun, exciting, popular events and amount to a substantial portion of the funds Strength For Life needs to do its important work in the community. Lots of different tasks are available, from event sign in, to gift basket collection and assembly, to raffle ticket selling, to run course water distribution. Anyone can contribute! Committee members as well as day-of-event support is needed for all of our events!

Wellness Retreats: Professional, certified and/or licensed instructors are needed to assist in facilitating Strength For Life’s Wellness Retreats. Yoga and Zumba Instructors, Reiki Practitioners, Fitness Professionals, and Holistic Health Educators are among some of the classes and seminars provided at our quarterly Wellness Retreats. We are seeking volunteers who are qualified to help at our retreats.

For more information on volunteering at Strength For Life, please contact Debbie Hughes, Volunteer Coordinator at strengthforlife@optonline.net.
Tim Beach  
Vice-President of Game Operations & Events, NY ISLANDERS

Tim Beach is in his 19th year with the New York Islanders and is responsible for the Islanders Game Operations, Events, and Community Relations departments. This includes the game entertainment, building operations, promotions, LED displays, Ice Girls, mascot, Islanders Community Events (I.C.E.) Tour programs, school assemblies, community outreach, youth hockey programs and non-game team events. Outside of sports and entertainment, he serves on the Quinnipiac University School of Communications Advisory Board, the Ross Yanco Children’s Foundation, and Strength for Life. Beach graduated from Quinnipiac College in Hamden, CT, in 1990 with a degree in Mass Communications. He and his wife, Linda, have a daughter, Annemarie and reside in Centerport, NY.

Denise Chapman  
Vice-President/Financial Advisor, Merrill Lynch

Denise Chapman is a Vice President/Financial Advisor for Merrill Lynch in Smithtown. Denise began her career in Finance in 1985 where she worked for E.F. Hutton in Huntington. Although her career path is in the financial world, her passion is fitness and to inspire others to live a healthy active lifestyle. Denise has been with Strength for Life while it was still an “idea”. She was our very first donor and has been a loyal supporter for many years. Denise has raised money for Strength for Life with her many athletic endeavors and has been a vocal advocate from the start.

Teresa Doherty  
Breast Cancer Survivor / Holistic Health Advocate

I have been battling cancer for the past 10 years. I was first diagnosed in 2003 shortly after moving to Long Island from Queens. I had a bilateral mastectomy and several lymph nodes removed. I chose not to do conventional methods against the recommendations of the doctors. That is when I began my quest for complementary and alternative treatments.

I have had 2 local recurrences since my first diagnosis and I was introduced to Strength for Life through an acupuncture support group. I am now on the Board of Directors for Strength for Life and I am happy to be paying it forward and helping other cancer survivors get the information and help they deserve.

Dr. Barbara A. Donnellan  
Coordinator of Guidance, Lindenhurst Public Schools  
Adjunct Professor, New York Institute of Technology

Barbara Donnellan has been a professional school counselor for 19 years, and a school counselor administrator for 18 years. She currently serves as the Coordinator of Guidance for the Lindenhurst Public Schools in Lindenhurst, New York, supervising counselors at both the high school and middle school levels. Previously Dr. Donnellan served as a school counselor and Director of Guidance for both the Babylon Public Schools in Babylon, New York, and Sacred Heart Academy, a private high school in Hempstead, New York.

In addition to her counseling duties, Barbara is currently an adjunct professor with the New York Institute of Technology, teaching graduate courses in school counseling, consultation and the ASCA comprehensive model for school counseling to aspiring school counselors. Previously she taught similar courses at St. John’s University. Dr. Donnellan can be reached at badonne@verizon.net or bdonnellan@lindenhurstschools.org.
Debra Hughes
Co-Founder, Strength for Life

Debbie’s interest in fitness and nutrition led her to her first personal training job over 15 years ago. She became Nautilus Certified and continued her education by attending Suffolk Community College to earn her AS as Fitness Specialist. Throughout the years Debbie has worked with a variety of clients with many different needs.

She started her own company, The Fitness Club, in 2005 which provides personal training and nutritional counseling to young adults with developmental and physical limitations. Debbie is creator of Color Kids Healthy, a fun way to teach children how to make healthy, natural and nutritional food choices while charting daily requirements. She also is a Level 2 Reiki Practitioner.

Debbie became a Certified Cancer Exercise Specialist after her friend and mentor lost her battle with breast cancer, this led to her to start Strength for Life. It has become her personal mission to promote the amazing benefits of exercise, nutrition and complementary care for those diagnosed with cancer and to keep the memory of her friend alive.

Sazeeda Itwaru, MBA, EA
Principal and Tax Accountant, Avant-Garde Consulting Inc.

Sazeeda Itwaru is the Principal and Tax Accountant at Avant-Garde Consulting Inc, a private advisory and business consulting practice serving both local and international clients since 2006. Prior to that, Sazeeda has been a Tax Accountant and Business Analyst for more than 15 years before launching Avant-Garde Consulting. She served as a Mayoral Representative at the NYC Office of Management and Budget on the NYC Deferred Compensation Plan Board where she carried out the fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the Agency governing retirement assets in excess of $4.5 billion.

An Economics major, Sazeeda earned an MBA in Financial Planning and holds securities, life, accident and health insurance licenses for NY, NJ and FL. Sazeeda is an Enrolled Agent admitted to practice before the IRS. She serves on various advisory committees including the Patient Family Advisory Council for the North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, the Health Committee for the Long Island Women Agenda, and the Membership Committee for the Financial Planning Association. In her spare time, Sazeeda enjoys biking, cooking, traveling and spending time with the family.

Strength For Life is a great resource for cancer patients and survivors of all genders and all cancers. Whether attending weekly exercise classes or one of our quarterly Wellness Retreats, Strength For Life can help anyone regain their strength for life for free. Please call 631.675.6513 for more information or visit us at www.strengthforlifeNY.org
Board of Directors

OFFICERS and MANAGEMENT
President - Debra A. Hughes
Vice President - Teresa Doherty
Treasurer - Dr. Barbara Donnellan
Secretary - Peggy Goutink
Chairperson - Tim Beach
Chairperson - Denise Chapman
Chairperson - Sazeeda Itwaru
Executive Director - Jacqui Errico

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - BIO
Jacqueline Errico

Jacqui has spent the last fifteen years in the health and fitness industry. She is certified as a Cancer Wellness Specialist by Medical Health and Fitness; certified as a Health Fitness Instructor/Personal Fitness Trainer from Hofstra University and the Academy of Applied Personal Training Education; and received an Associate in Science as Fitness Specialist from Suffolk County Community College. Jacqui has worked as a personal trainer, held fitness classes for seniors, instructed students with developmental disabilities, and performed practical instruction for new hires. In addition, her past experience includes volunteer coordinator at a Long Island hospice. Presently, Jacqui’s focus is to raise awareness of the importance of exercise for cancer survivorship and promote regular physical activity as an essential therapy for those diagnosed with cancer.

STRENGTH FOR LIFE
Features:

Free weekly exercise classes

Free exercise equipment for client to keep including stability ball, yoga mat and exercise bands

Free Wellness Retreat featuring informational lectures on alternative healing therapies

Ongoing support for cancer patients and survivors
Our Business Model

Compassion, high standards and rock-solid governance provide an exceptional foundation for Strength For Life to provide a comprehensive array of free services to Long Island residents. Thanks to our energetic, passionate staff and volunteers - Strength For Life offers high-quality care and service. Our unique ability to offer exercise classes at a variety of locations in Nassau and Suffolk to eliminate the burden of travel makes our non profit exceptional. For those in need, Strength For Life offers hope and encouragement, as well as the tools to build a more positive, healthy life.

Our Mandate

To provide exercise classes and educational programs for people affected by cancer throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties.
To review and update our programs, based on the evolving scientific literature available for optimal recovery.
To maintain a balanced budget so we can continue to provide our services at no cost to every individual affected by cancer.

Program Management

Because the heart of our mission is providing services to people affected by cancer, we continually monitor our programs to ensure they meet the needs of our community. Every new exercise session requires our clients to complete initial surveys, including functional living, psycho-social and pain scale surveys. At the conclusion of each session a follow up survey is completed to determine measurable outcomes.
Because performance metrics do not always tell the whole story, our team discussing “what is working” and “what needs adjustment” on a routine basis.

Financial Management

Each Board Meeting the Executive Director provides the members with detailed financial statements, including cash position statements and fundraising balance reports.

Fundraising

Our year-round fundraising efforts are in four major categories: events, athletes, beneficiary, grants. We apply our knowledge and creativity to develop new products, events and fundraising ideas and we monitor the results to see which approaches are most effective.

Community Outreach

Our team uses the latest technology to support our fundraising and expand our outreach into the community. We recognize that the creative use of website marketing and social media activity makes a difference in today’s world of competitive fundraising. We have been able to capitalize on social media marketing.
Our proactive strategy embraces Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogging, as well as an active and continuously updated web presence using Google Ad Words. We have increased our followers by focusing on interesting topics and numerous call to action events. These social media conversations allow our organization to connect with potential participants and supporters of all generations.
A major focus of Strength for Life is growth - growth in the number of people we serve and in the number of medical professionals we can educate on the benefits of exercise in treatment and recovery.

Since our first class held in the basement of a friend’s home, we have stayed true to our mission to make commitment to exercise easily accessible for the survivor by seeking donated space in the geographic location of interested survivors. As a rule of thumb, 4 interested individuals is adequate for us to open a class. We have held classes at 9 locations on Long Island - and currently hold ongoing classes at 6 locations. The classes are 8 weeks in length, one time a week and repeated quarterly. We invite survivors to attend different locations as long as the space allows, giving them an opportunity to strength train twice a week under our guidance. In addition, we provide the necessary equipment for the participant to continue the exercise prescription at home. These include resistance bands, stability balls and exercise mats. We truly try to eliminate any opposition to adding exercise into their life, “it is free, here is the equipment, and we will come to you”.

Since 2011 our class participation has grown nearly 50%, from 90 class participants in 2011 to 131 in 2013, and a far cry from our first class of 5.

Our wellness retreats is a gift for the survivor to escape the day to day concerns and join us in learning different movement and healing therapies. The retreats keep evolving but remain constant in the many useful lessons they take home with them. Yoga, QiGong or Tai Chi, Zumba along with our strength training class gives each survivor an opportunity to try a movement class they may incorporate into their lifestyle. Reiki, Meditation, Yoga Inspired Writing, Art Therapy and Feng Shui for Healing round off the therapies for mind, body and spirit. In addition, Doctors of Naturopathic and Osteopathic Medicine enlighten the survivors with information on complementary therapies they may choose to consider.

We acknowledge the need for conventional medicine and understand the enormous information given out by the medical team and choose to add to their disseminated information. It has only been since 2010 when the American College of Sports Medicine changed their guidelines to “avoid inactivity” that many studies are arising on the benefits of exercise during treatment and recovery. It is our mission to share that information with the general population and the medical field, and make it easily accessible for “thrivers” to take advantage of group classes and learn from cancer certified exercise specialists the safest way to incorporate exercise into their daily lifestyle and treatment plan.

Strength for Life was named LIWA’s (Long Island Women’s Agenda) Organization of the Year in 2013, we present at support groups throughout Long Island, participate on the Suffolk County Cancer Awareness Task Force and have had some great coverage in the press. With these acknowledgements comes growth and the need for financial assistance. Strength for Life relies on our fundraising efforts to afford our programs ‘at no cost’ to survivors. We are acutely aware of the astronomical co-pays that a cancer diagnosis demands and know, equally, the benefits that can be achieved by adding an exercise program into the treatment and recovery plan.
Financials

Public Support 2009 - 2013

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2013 Financials

- Annual Campaign and general donations: $ 4,085
- Special Events Income: $ 70,487
- General Operating Expense: $ 23,469
- Exercise Class Instructors: $ 10,200
- Wellness Retreat Expense: $ 10,739
- Equipment for Survivors: $ 1,458
- Fundraising Expense: $ 38,352