

# RESILIENCE NEWSLETTER

PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY &  
CANCER PATIENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

## FALL CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 06  
OCTOBER 2023

FROM DR. KATIE DUCKWORTH, POP/CPSP DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Fall edition of *Resilience*. As I am writing this, the intense heat of summer remains; the autumnal sunshine beckons. The crispness of fall mornings, colorful hues, and fresh smells of textured leaves draw us outdoors to remind us of life's inevitable beauty and changes. New growth emerges, racing upwards to beat the forthcoming frost as the intense heat gracefully abates. It is an incredible time to connect with nature. It also is an incredible time to connect with those in our daily lives.

In welcoming many new POP/CPSP team members over the past months, we have been considering meaningful ways to connect with one another. How can we support each other in our work and professional trajectories throughout our daily lives? How can we create new traditions within our team? Connecting with our colleagues is an essential part of professional satisfaction that also pushes back against burn-out in emotionally demanding settings such as this. From leaving surprises in one another's offices to taking the time to schedule coffee or indulge in cake time, finding ways to connect with others in the workplace is essential. Beyond our immediate teams, we are being intentional about reaching out to providers in other disciplines who work in parallel fashion to care for patients. Recognizing we have a lot to learn from our colleagues in other arenas and that collaboration often results in categorical improvement in patient care, we are working to connect with those also traversing this campus.

Across campus, we are embracing institutional growth and our counterparts in the Psychosocial Oncology Program on the Charlotte campus. We are discussing ways to open individual and group programming, opportunities for shared professional development, and co-constructed advertising and patient education initiatives. These changes bring forth new opportunities to connect, to empower, to teach, and to support. One recent connection-focused initiative that strives to foster institutional community is a new Employee Book Club Luncheon for all cancer-related employees in Atrium Health Levine Cancer. This virtual meeting on the second Friday of each month encourages

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# HEALING ARTS THERAPY CLINIC CALENDAR



**1st & 3rd Mondays, 1:00-2:30 pm**  
**Provider Wellness Art Therapy Process Groups**  
 Providers of various disciplines gather in small groups to engage in art therapy experientials and supportive conversation to support overall wellness, process grief, foster healing, reduce compassion fatigue, and enhance personal/professional development.

**Wednesdays, 10:00-11:00 am**  
**Art Therapy in the PODS, 3rd floor Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC)**

Guided breath work, art making, and therapeutic conversation made available to patients and caregivers present during infusion treatments.

**3rd Wednesday of the month, 1:00-2:00 pm**  
**Inpatient Art Therapy Group, 6th floor inpatient resource room, CCC**

Patients and caregivers are invited to participate in a mixture of guided breath work, art making, and therapeutic conversation with others facing similar experiences during inpatient hospital care.

**Fridays, 1:00-2:30 pm**  
**Open Art Therapy Studio -3rd floor hospitality room, CCC**

Individuals are invited to gather, connect, and share with others on their wellness journey through art making and therapeutic conversation. All supplies included.

**Monday-Friday, 8:00am-4:00pm**  
**Inpatient Art Therapy Assessments, Comprehensive Cancer Center**

Art therapy is offered to patients and caregivers receiving inpatient hospital care to help process the emotional, psychological, and physical effects of cancer and treatment side effects. Formal art therapy and psychosocial counseling consultations and assessments are completed within 24-48 hours during CPSP clinic hours.



AVERY PETERSON



EBONY MORGAN



HUNTER WILLIAMS



# Volunteers Bring Brightness to Patients

by Erica Fox, MA, LCMHC, NCC, ATR



TEDY RUTHLEDGE & ALEX MILLER

A big THANK YOU to our amazing volunteers Tedy Ruthledge, Alex Miller, Avery Peterson, Ebony Morgan, and Hunter Williams who participated in card making for our patients this summer and passed out over 60 cards to patients receiving infusion treatments at the Cancer Center.



**The CPSP Healing Arts Specialty Clinic** offers art therapy for patients and caregivers receiving inpatient and outpatient care to process physical, emotional, and psychological experiences when faced with cancer. CPSP strives to ensure that no one faces cancer alone and understands that everyone processes the impact of cancer in different ways. Art therapy requires no previous artistic skill and provides individuals with a unique opportunity to process experienced thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations while making art, and discover ways created art products can guide awareness, healing, growth, and connection on their personal journey. Healing arts therapy services are also made available for providers on their wellness journey to process grief, foster healing, and reduce compassion fatigue as they continue caring for others.

## LIVING IN SURVIVORSHIP: REMISSION AND/OR CURED.

By Lisa A. Rainwater, PhD, MA (couns), LCMHC, CCMHC, GCP, CT

While each person is unique and each diagnosis is unique, engaging in mindfulness practices can be beneficial to everyone. In our last issue, I discussed living in survivorship post-treatment. It's a time one can find anxiety-riddled, leading up to the first set of scans or blood panels. In this issue, I reflect on living in survivorship once one has received a determination of "in remission" or "cured."

As a refresher, here are the five paths addressed in this series. For previous paths (new diagnosis, treatment, and post-treatment), please refer to [our previous newsletters!](#) It is important to keep in mind that not everyone will go through each of them, and they are not necessarily linear. The majority of my survivor clients are walking the path of at least one of the following branches:

- New diagnosis
- Treatment
- Post-treatment
- Remission and/or cured
- Recurrence and/or metastases.

"ENJOY EVERY DAY  
WITHOUT WORRYING  
ABOUT THE NEXT."

— DIEGO ZAMORA,  
PANCREATIC CANCER  
SURVIVOR

Depending on the type and staging of your cancer, you may have undergone chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, surgery, and/or a combination of these treatments. The type, staging, and length of time in remission may also define whether you are living "cured" of your cancer.

### UNDERSTANDING DEFINITIONS

According to the [National Cancer Institute](#):

Cure means that there are no traces of your cancer after treatment and the cancer will never come back. Remission means that the signs and symptoms of your cancer are reduced. Remission can be partial or complete. In a complete remission, all signs and symptoms of cancer have disappeared.



### MANAGING SCANXIETY

Scanxiety is defined as intense feelings of debilitating anxiety arising around the time of a scans or labs to determine cancer's response to treatment.

# Take Good Care. Attend Virtual Cancer Wellness Workshops.

Tuesday Evenings, 6:30 - 7:45 pm

Open to all North Carolina persons with a cancer diagnosis.

Cancer caregivers are welcome, if they attend with their loved one.



### **October 3: Reducing Uncertainty & Scanxiety**

This workshop provides insights into how to live with the uncertainty of cancer recurrence and to manage scanxiety. You will gain an understanding of your responses to triggers and threats and how to respond through mindfulness practices and intellectual wellness activities to improve quality of life.

### **October 17: Fostering Relational & Emotional Wellness**

This workshop provides insights into how relationships can change and grow between loved ones on a cancer journey. You will gain an understanding of how to feel and express human emotions, cope with stress, be aware of personal feelings and others' feelings, think positively of self and others, and improve flexibility & adaptability.

### **November 14: Engaging in Whole Body Wellness**

This workshop provides insights into how the eight areas of wellness – physical, emotional, spiritual, vocational, intellectual, financial, environmental, and relational – can serve as a roadmap for reducing a variety of cancer journey challenges, including distress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, fatigue, “chemo / radiation fog,” and caregiver burnout. You will gain an understanding of how to track progress and adapt to challenges with a variety of evidence-based techniques that can help you improve your quality of life.

### **December 12: Facing Our Existential Fears**

This workshop provides insights into the four existential concerns of being human: Isolation, Freedom, Meaninglessness, and Death Anxiety. You will gain an understanding of how these concerns can arise on your cancer journey, how to face them with curiosity and dignity, and find support amongst fellow workshop attendees who experience similar concerns.

## Psychosocial Oncology & Cancer Patient Support Programs

Led by Lisa A. Rainwater, MA (couns), PhD, LCMHC, CCMHC, CGP, CT

To register, contact Emily LaFontaine, LCSWA || 336-716-2394 || [elafonta@wakehealth.edu](mailto:elafonta@wakehealth.edu)

# HUNTER WILLIAMS: 2023 VOLUNTEER.

By Erica Fox, MA, LCMHC, NCC, ATR



**Hunter Williams is a 17-year-old, rising high school senior, hoping to study biology at UNC Chapel Hill after graduation.**

He joined the Summer Volunteer Program at the Medical Center two days a week, 8am-4pm, for four weeks over the summer. Hunter helped serve snacks and coffee to patients and families at the Cancer Center and created hand-made cards for patients receiving infusion treatments.

I enjoyed working with the volunteers this summer and was fortunate to talk with Hunter about how he found himself volunteering with us!

**CPSP:** What led you to volunteer at the AHWFB Medical Center?

**Hunter:** I wanted to learn what it is like to work in a hospital environment and enjoy getting to meet new people.

**CPSP:** Have you volunteered here before? And would you recommend it to others?

**Hunter:** No, this was my first year volunteering here. Yes, I'd recommend it to others who enjoy meeting new people and helping in different parts of the hospital.

**CPSP:** What has been your favorite part of about volunteering?

**Hunter:** Meeting new people.

*We thank Hunter and his fellow volunteers for bringing joy and comfort to our cancer families this summer and wish them luck on their life journeys!*

**Would you like to join a group of committed, passionate, lively, and kind individuals who volunteer at the Cancer Patient Support Program?**

Consider contributing your time and talents to our patients and their loved ones, while experiencing meaningful engagements and enjoying excellent benefits:

**Learn more -->**

<https://www.wakehealth.edu/about-us/volunteer-services>



## INTERVIEW WITH A PROVIDER.



## DR. RYAN HUGHES.

Interviewed by Carrie Madsen, MS, LCMHC, NCC

### What is your oncology specialty and how long have you been practicing at AHWFB?

Dr. Ryan Hughes is Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist. A native of Florida, Dr. Hughes completed his undergraduate degree, medical degree, and residency at Wake Forest University. He is currently the director of Head/Neck radiation therapy and has been in his position since 2020.

As an undergraduate, Dr. Hughes was attracted to cancer biology and initially thought he wanted to work in a lab. However, experience taught him that greater human interaction would be a better fit. When considering oncology specialties, he discovered that radiation oncology was “rewarding from a relationship standpoint, while also offering a unique balance between physics and the technical art of designing a treatment plan.”

Dr. Hughes is passionate about helping head/neck patients experience fewer side effects from treatment: Much of his current research focuses on reducing radiation toxicity (such as mucositis and/or dermatitis), thereby increasing quality of life for long-term survivors.

### How have you utilized CPSP services?

Dr. Hughes makes frequent referrals to outpatient counseling with CPSP, paying close attention to patients with pre-existing life stressors and/or mental health concerns exacerbated by treatment. “Every patient who has taken advantage of CPSP has found benefit: I’ve never had anyone tell me that it was not a helpful service.”

Despite this, Dr. Hughes found that a significant number of patients simply did not follow through with the referral. This prompted him to reach

out to CPSP to explore collaborative possibilities between the head/neck cancer clinic and the Psychosocial Oncology and Cancer Patient Support Programs.

“To my surprise and delight, the request was met with an enthusiastic ‘yes!’”

Since then, Dr. Hughes has been piloting a program, wherein a CPSP staff member joins his integrated team and provides weekly care to head/neck cancer patients in radiation oncology.

While the project is still in its infancy, Dr. Hughes reported that he has already observed that integrating CPSP into the weekly check-ins with the dietitian and the speech-language pathologist increases patients’ openness to conversations about their mental health.

### How do your patients benefit from working with one of our psychosocial oncology counselors?

Dr. Hughes noted, “It is well-documented in the literature that head/neck cancer patients are at greater risk for suicide and other mental health challenges.” Knowing this, Dr. Hughes proactively monitors his patients’ mental health concerns, especially during the acute phase of treatment because “life goes on during treatment—all of the stressors that were there before diagnosis continue to be there for the patient as well as for the caregiver.”

Dr. Hughes hopes his collaboration with CPSP will grow into a model of integrated care that could be studied and duplicated by other clinics in the cancer center. “Ultimately, the goal is to improve quality of life and positively impact long-term survival while not increasing the burden placed on patients or caregivers.”

“Every patient who has taken advantage of CPSP has found benefit: I’ve never had anyone tell me that it was not a helpful service.”

~ Dr. Ryan Hughes

## ONGOING SERIES: WHAT IS ACT & HOW IS IT RELEVANT TO CANCER CARE?

By Carrie Madsen, MS, LCMHC, NCC

### Psychological Flexibility in ACT, Part IV: Defusion

In a previous issue of *Resilience*, we began our exploration of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and its relevance for cancer care. ACT (pronounced like the verb “to act”) is an evidence-based treatment that has been shown to be effective for cancer patients (Johnson et al, 2021). In its broadest sense, ACT promotes “psychological flexibility,” which is the capacity to respond flexibly to

way people think. For instance, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) focuses explicitly on helping patients think more accurately about their situation by challenging painful thoughts and replacing them with more rational alternatives. In many cases, this formula works beautifully. But what happens when thoughts like “I’m a failure” or “This is hopeless” continue to dominate our attention even after we recognize their fallibility or attempt to substitute more logical alternatives? Unlike

erful force that we often take words literally. To illustrate, think about the word “lemon.” Chances are, this will evoke the image of yellow fruit, trigger memories of making lemonade, provoke the smell of lemons, and/or even stimulate the sensation of tartness on your tongue – all experiences that *feel* very real. Without awareness, we can easily “fuse” with this word and fail to recognize that there is no actual lemon in sight (Hayes et al, 2012).



what is happening in life so that we can make intentional choices and move towards being the person we want to be (Hayes et al, 2012). Therapeutically, ACT divides psychological flexibility into six different, but coordinated components, the first two of which (Present-Moment Awareness and the Observer Self) were previously discussed. The third of these components is Defusion—arguably one of ACT’s most original contributions to the field of psychology.

In many ways it is easier to describe Defusion by what it is not. Much of mainstream psychotherapy focuses on changing the

CBT, ACT does not attempt to change or replace thoughts; instead, ACT focuses on changing our *relationship* with thoughts so that they are less believable and no longer control our choices or behavior.

Defusion is about “...learning when to follow what your mind says and when to simply be aware of your mind while attending to the here and now” (Hayes, et al, 2012). It renegotiates our relationship with language by teaching us “...how to use our thoughts as tools rather than be used by them” (Blackledge, 2015). Defusion is needed because language is such a pow-

erful force that we often take words literally. To witness the array of mental associations that word evokes. Couple this with a challenging medical history, physical pain, and/or limited present-moment awareness skills, and it is not hard to see how fusion can increase cancer patients’ suffering. Fortunately, Defusion skills can help patients learn to see thoughts as thoughts and make values-congruent choices that positively impact their lives.

Please stay tuned for the next issue of *Resilience*, where we will begin to explore the fourth facet of psychological flexibility: Acceptance.

#### References

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- Johnson, A., C. Delduca, & R. Morris, 2021. *Flying over Thunderstorms: Living your Life with Cancer Through Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. New York: Routledge.



# MEET MELINDA SMITH, FINANCIAL NAVIGATOR

By Emily LaFontaine, LCSWA

Melinda Smith, lead financial navigator, oversees a team of financial navigators that aims to decrease stressors of financial toxicity related to cancer.

The team helps cancer survivors, their caregivers, and family members understand the out-of-pocket costs associated with treatment, answers questions about different health insurance options, and assists in identifying possible alternative resources. All new oncology patients are screened for financial navigation services.

Smith began her career with Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist in registration. Later, a friend encouraged her to apply for a financial navigation position. Smith was interested, because the financial navigators spend much of their time working one-on-one with individuals and their families. Now, Smith is thankful to be in the position and feels fortunate to work with the population who has taught her to “value every moment.”



Smith is uplifted by the compassionate collaboration that exists among the teams at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, including financial navigation, nurse navigation, population health, pharmacy, registration, and Cancer Patient Support.

The financial navigation team collaborates with CPSP whenever a patient struggles with financial toxicity and would benefit from CPSP’s counseling services, which includes individual and couples therapy as well as group therapy. CPSP clinicians refer clients to the financial navigation team, whenever there are specific financial-related questions and/or concerns.

Smith’s past professional roles include working with people with cognitive disabilities, working in the juvenile justice system, and working for a Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income (SSDI/SSI) program. Outside of the office, Smith enjoys spending time with her 12-year-old daughter, whom she describes as her “pride and joy.” She also enjoys swimming, walking, and going out to eat.

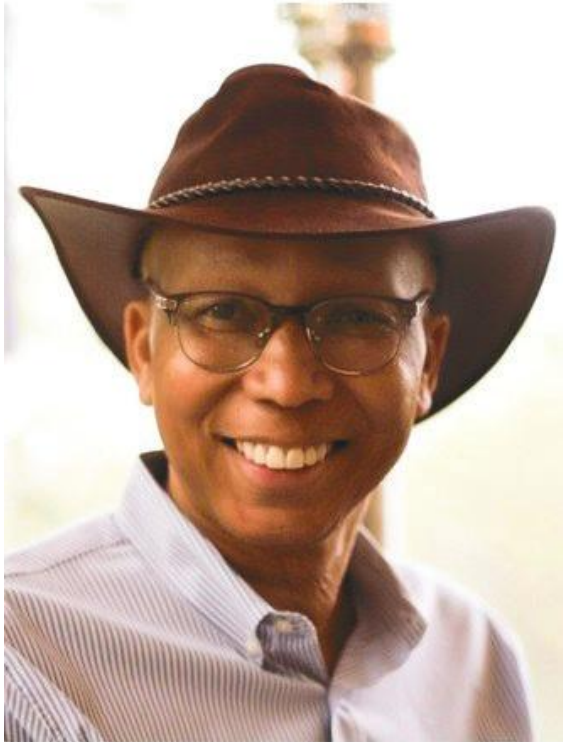
**Individuals may request information about financial navigation by contacting Melinda Smith at 336-713-2688 or [melinsmi@wakehealth.edu](mailto:melinsmi@wakehealth.edu).**



**“DIFFICULT ROADS CAN  
LEAD TO BEAUTIFUL  
DESTINATIONS.”**

**KIA WYNN,  
ORAL CANCER SURVIVOR**

# IN MEMORIAM: DR. ARTHUR WILLIAM BLACKSTOCK, JR



It was with heavy hearts that the Cancer Patient Support Program staff learned of Dr. Arthur William Blackstock, Jr.'s passing on Sunday, June 18, 2023, at the age of 60. Since joining the Department of Radiation Oncology in 1996, Dr. Blackstock had been a champion of patient-centered care and an ardent supporter of CPSP counseling for patients and families walking a cancer journey. His areas of clinical expertise were gastrointestinal and lung cancer, and he believed that working with cancer patients was a privilege. Dr. Blackstock's patients expressed appreciation and admiration for his medical expertise and bedside manner; they found him compassionate, encouraging, and easy to talk with and understand.

As one of the first African-American chairpersons in the field of radiation oncology, Dr. Blackstock served as department chairperson from 2008 until his death. From 2022-2023, he also served as interim director of the hospital medical center's Comprehensive Cancer Center, at the same time he was undergoing chemotherapy treatments for metastatic prostate cancer.

Dr. Blackstock was a nationally recognized researcher, whose work investigated novel drugs and treatment approaches in combination with radiation therapy—his research has resulted in new cancer treatments in use today. He was a strong advocate for health equity and found great meaning and purpose in his research and resulting publication that investigated social determinants of health for African-Americans with lung cancer. His work has been published in over 100 academic journal articles and book chapters. Dr. Blackstock served on councils and steering committees at the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute, as well as on editorial boards for several medical journals.

Dr. Blackstock especially enjoyed traveling world-wide and taking family vacations in Saint John. He loved cooking, entertaining, going all out for holidays, and spending time with his family, especially at his mountain home in Banner Elk. He continued living fully and working until a week before his death, not wanting to complain or worry others during his extended illness.

Dr. Blackstock's legacy will live on in the hearts of colleagues as well as his patients and their families. He requested that donations be made to the [Cancer Patient Support Program](#) at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist or the [American Cancer Society](#).

Dr. Blackstock's legacy will live on in the hearts of colleagues as well as his patients and their families. He requested that donations be made to the [Cancer Patient Support Program](#) at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist or the [American Cancer Society](#).

This is excerpted from Dr. Blackstock's obituary found here: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/winstonsalem/name/arthur-blackstock-obituary?id=52282925>





Julie Freischlag, chief executive officer of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist (left), and William Blackstock (second from far left) represent the Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center, which received a \$578,116 check from the Brian Piccolo Student Cancer Drive.

Source: Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center

“IN 2022, KNOWING HIS PROGNOSIS WITH ADVANCED PROSTATE CANCER, WILLIAM SELFLESSLY AND COURAGEOUSLY STEPPED IN TO SERVE AS INTERIM DIRECTOR TO LEAD US THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF TRANSITION.”

~ RUBEN A. MESA AND JENNY KIM



William Blackstock (left) and Ruben Mesa (right). Blackstock received a certificate of appreciation from Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center for his service as interim director in 2022-2023.

Source: Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center



## INTERVIEW WITH CHACY SANFILIPPO, LCMHC: PROVIDING STAFF SUPPORT ACROSS THE ENTERPRISE

By Holly Hallman, LCSW

Every day in the Employee Assistance Program, Chacy SanFilippo, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor, provides assessment, referral, and support services for employees and their families seeking assistance with a variety of life challenges from across the AHWFB enterprise.

With over 30 years of counseling experience, Chacy brings extensive expertise, compassion, humility, and wisdom to her work, not to mention a great sense of humor. For 20 of these years, Chacy has worked in healthcare settings that bear witness to serious illness, death, and grief. This background, combined with her personal experience as a Stage 3 breast cancer survivor, has equipped her with firsthand knowledge and unique insight into the perspectives of oncology patients, their loved ones, and providers.

I had the pleasure to sit down with Chacy recently to talk about her work, passions, and comfort wisdom. Our conversation centered on the importance of supporting oncology staff as they work in circumstances that span the breadth and depth of human emotions. Dealing with pain, suffering, uncertainty, fear, and grief on a daily basis can take its toll. Helping staff to identify their own sources of suffering and comfort in their roles is essential, as is requesting their input on strategies that would help them to feel supported and cared for in their daily work. Also critical is helping staff assess their self-care tools and develop a plan that is workable for themselves.

Chacy laughed, as she conceded, “There’s often an eye roll at the term self-care.” So, she explores it differently: What are your sources of comfort?



Of renewal? Of strength? Of peace? Of fun? How can you work those into your daily life?

Chacy has heard many oncology staff share the challenges of creating opportunities for fun, connection, comfort, and renewal in their non-work time. Her encouragement? “Don’t delay joy.”

Chacy recounted her own oncology treatment journey as being treated as a whole person first, a patient second: “My nurses did not focus solely on cancer. They really got to know me. I trusted them completely: I knew about their families, and they knew about mine. We would laugh like crazy.” Chacy’s recollection serves as an important reminder that joy can live even in the midst of the hardest days.

And a final reminder: We all have limits, so know when you need to say no and when you want to say yes, and don’t hesitate to ask for help when you need it. After all, as Chacy reminded me, “We are all just walking each other home.” (Ram Dass).

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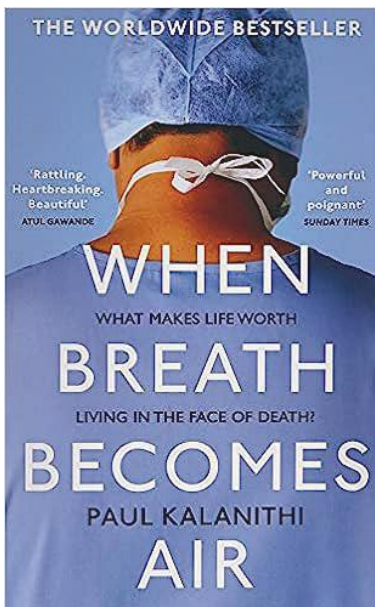
The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at AHWFB is available to all employees and their spouses, domestic partners, and dependent children, free of charge. It is a private and confidential support program that provides assessment, referral, and follow-up services to address a wide range of personal/emotional concerns.

Contact: 336-716-5493

<https://intranet.wakehealth.edu/human-resources/well-being/eap>

# Creating Community. Join Atrium Health Levine Cancer's Employee Book Club.

2nd Fridays, Virtual, 12 pm  
Meeting October 13th



All cancer-related employees are invited to come together to broaden our understanding of the cancer patient experience outside exam rooms, as we discuss books written by cancer survivors and their caregivers.

Grab your lunch and engage in discussions of humanity's deepest emotions, joys, & experiences while fostering conversations around our shared values.

We will read one book each month. You are encouraged to finish the book prior to our meeting, but all are welcome regardless of completion.

Our October book is the New York Times Bestseller, *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi. The Sunday Times described the memoir as, "compulsory for anyone who intends to be a doctor."

Get a 20% discount at Bookmarks with the code "ATRIUM20."

Email Emily LaFontaine, LCSWA to register: [elafonta@wakehealth](mailto:elafonta@wakehealth).

Sponsored by the Psychosocial Oncology Program at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist and the Department of Supportive Oncology at Atrium Health Levine Cancer.

# NURSES CARE! MEET MICHELLE KENNEDY, NURSE MANAGER, AHWFB WILKES ONCOLOGY CLINIC

By Holly Hallman, LCSW



The clang of a cowbell, followed by cheers throughout the lobby, signals the last day of chemotherapy treatment for another patient at the AHWFB Wilkes Oncology Clinic, established in August 2020 at Wilkes Medical Center. Michelle

caring for oncology patients.

This team works to meet not only the healthcare needs of their patients but psychosocial needs as well. “Patients become like family” and are usually very comfortable talking with their team about all aspects of their treatment and how they are coping. Nurses also function as case managers in the Wilkes Oncology Clinic, making referrals to community resources when needed. One of the oncology physicians started a food pantry, which the community keeps stocked for patients needing food assistance. At Thanksgiving, staff provide an “Everything But the Turkey” bag to ensure families have a Thanksgiving meal. Michelle also worked closely with a chaplain to secure a grant from FaithHealth that helps provide transportation to those in need.

Kennedy, nurse manager, shared that “in Wilkes County, you ring cowbells for everything.” A tradition begun in the absence of a traditional victory bell, every patient takes home a cowbell decorated and signed by their treatment team, courtesy of a grant obtained by Michelle and her team. This is just one example of the creativity and compassion that is the hallmark of the patient experience at Wilkes Oncology.

Working in a small, rural community, where resources are more limited than in larger cities, Michelle and her team innovate and collaborate closely with others, both within and outside of the medical center. “We have a great team,” she shared. “Everyone here genuinely cares about the community, and we want to make sure that patient needs are getting met.” As nurse manager in an outlying clinic, Michelle not only manages the administrative side of things but also helps provide direct patient care, creates programs/connections to meet patient needs, and educates other providers who are less familiar with

“Everyone here genuinely cares about the community, and we want to make sure that patient needs are getting met.”

~ Michelle Kennedy, RN

Born and raised in the beautiful foothills of Wilkes County, Michelle shared that one of the many meaningful aspects of her work is “caring for people in your home community.” Taking care of people that she has known, sometimes over her whole life, can be hard, but is also rewarding. A quote that she keeps by her desk guides her: “Don’t confuse your current path with your destination. Just because

it’s stormy now doesn’t mean you aren’t headed for sunshine.” Whether it is celebrating a hard-fought victory, or supporting patients in deciding how they want to live the life that remains to them when a hoped-for outcome is not achieved, Michelle and her team work to make a difference in the lives of the individuals and families that come through their doors. “The patients make every day a good day to work.”



## FALL CONNECTIONS (CONT.).

understanding of the cancer experience exterior to clinical exam rooms. All books are written by cancer survivors or their caregivers, with the inaugural being *Between Two Kingdoms: A Memoir of a Life Interrupted* by Suleika Jaouad. Lisa promises to welcome all employees, even those who have not made it through all the chapters! Please bring your lunch and join us to connect with colleagues and consider ways to complement your thinking about patient experiences.

Another connection-focused initiative to highlight is Erica’s volunteen card campaign. As the summer volunteens scurried around the cancer center, Erica provided art supplies

for them to create tangible cards to deliver to those receiving treatment in the outpatient treatment bay. The recognition brings smiles to patients’ faces as they receive these thoughtful, heart-warming cards. It is a simple yet meaningful gesture that honors connection.

Thank you for taking the time to connect with us and to read about all that we have been undertaking. Continue to enjoy autumn and all that this glorious season has to offer. We invite you to reach out at any time.

Warmest regards,

Katie

“CANCER DOESN’T HAVE TO DEFINE YOU.”  
 – NELDA BLAIR, ANAL CANCER SURVIVOR

### PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY & CANCER PATIENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

#### MISSION

To reduce suffering and improve the quality of life of cancer patients and their loved ones across the lifespan, throughout survivorship and beyond.

#### VISION

Ensure no one faces cancer alone.

#### VALUES

- Accountability & Transparency
- Inclusion & Diversity
- Innovation & Curiosity
- Collaboration & Commitment to Service

#### OBJECTIVES

- Reduce barriers to psychosocial support
- Collaborate with and support providers
- Optimize patient, caregiver, & family services
- Empower our community with shared knowledge and programming

#### RESILIENCE

Newsletter Editor: Lisa A. Rainwater

*Resilience* is a quarterly newsletter of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist’s Psychosocial Oncology (POP) and Cancer Patient Support (CPSP) Programs.

*Resilience* is written by POP/CPSP team members

With this free publication, we seek to promote our psychosocial programming, provide psychoeducation on wellness and mindfulness, and highlight the work of our integrated partners and their expertise. We accept recommendations for future interviewees and guest writers.

The newsletter is published quarterly for free distribution and is accessible as a PDF at [www.wakehealth.edu/cancerservices](http://www.wakehealth.edu/cancerservices)



To Benefit the Cancer Patient Support Program

*Save the date for SummerLark*

**SummerLark is returning on May 11, 2024!**

Join us for an outdoor concert at **Bailey Park** in **Innovation Quarter** benefiting the **Cancer Patient Support Program (CPSP)** at **Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist**. This fun-filled event will provide many ways to show your support for the **CPSP** and will include incredible live music, food trucks, fireworks and fun for the whole family.

**Ticket and Talent Announcement Coming Soon!**

**Corporate Sponsorships Available**

Contact Sara Morales at [SMorales@WakeHealth.edu](mailto:SMorales@WakeHealth.edu) or **336-716-6619**.

Presented by



For complete information, visit [Giving.WakeHealth.edu/SummerLark](http://Giving.WakeHealth.edu/SummerLark)

All proceeds will benefit the Cancer Patient Support Program at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center.



**Atrium Health**  
**Wake Forest Baptist**

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT: FARRAH DIXON

By Lindsay Seigenthaler, LCMHCA

Farrah Dixon is the President and CEO of Quality Labels & Packaging North America and a Member of the Cancer Advisory Board. She is a stalwart supporter of CPSP's programming! In my recent conversation with Farrah, she shared her personal journey and experiences with AHWFB's Comprehensive Cancer Center. Her connection to the program began when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer at the Cancer Center, setting them on a path that would inspire her deep involvement.

Farrah played a significant role in supporting her mother throughout her treatment. She recounted, "Being an only child, I was able to take a large role in helping support her through all facets of her treatment." Their treatment navigation system consisted of her mother focusing solely on remaining strong and fighting, while Farrah focused on the details of the everyday. Her mother's enduring mantra of "Tomorrow will be a better day" resonated with Farrah, as her mother never once complained about her treatment. Instead, she sought ways to uplift fellow patients, such as improving room lighting by providing lamps and donating surplus Neupogen injections, in hopes that others could spend time with their friends and families.

After her mother's death in 2009, Farrah felt compelled to continue her legacy and voice. She became increasingly involved in the community and the advisory board, dedicating herself to the cause.

Reflecting on her involvement with the Cancer Advisory Board, Farrah shared, "Unfortunately, my mom passed away in October of 2009. I was asked to join the advisory board in 2010 and have continued ever since. The support the hospital provides to the board is just amazing." For Farrah, the board has served as a platform to provide input and personal experiences from both a patient and caregiver perspective. She shares that knowing their experience has a voice to help create progress, growth, and hope for other people is incredibly special.

Aside from her involvement with the advisory board, Farrah is the President and CEO of Quality Labels & Packaging North America, a 100% women-owned business in Winston Salem. Her company has been a corporate sponsor for the annual SummerLark for several years. Farrah recognizes the significance of these events in fostering community engagement, support, funding, and education—making them an integral part of her business's commitment to the program.

Thank you, Farrah, for all you do for our patients and caregivers in the memory of your mom! #grateful



### Make a Gift Today

CPSP depends on the generosity of patients, family, and friends to provide its services. Contributions are tax deductible. There are two ways to make a donation. The first is through direct mail for Cancer Patient Support Program to: Office of Philanthropy and Alumni Relations, CPSP Gifts Officer, Medical Center Boulevard, Winston Salem, NC 27157; or follow the link below for donating online and select "Cancer Patient Support Program" when prompted.

<https://wakehealth.edu/give>



# Take Good Care. Writing Support Group for Survivors & Caregivers.

1st & 3rd Tuesdays, Virtual, 11 am



This 10-week writing group will help you explore existential questions such as “What have I learned on this cancer journey? Who am I now? What is my purpose in life? How do I find comfort in self and others?” Different writing genres will help you find expression in a safe space.

Everyone touched by cancer, regardless of writing experience, is invited to attend.



**Scan to register!**

Psychosocial Oncology & Cancer Patient  
Support Programs || 336-716-2394  
[wakehealth.edu/cancer-support](http://wakehealth.edu/cancer-support)



**Atrium Health**  
**Wake Forest Baptist**

# THE POWER OF EXPRESSION:

## How Writing Can Improve Your Wellbeing

By Lisa A. Rainwater, PhD, MA (couns),  
LCMHC, CCMHC, GCP, CT

Living with a cancer diagnosis can often feel like Cancer has become the main character in a never-ending drama directed by your medical team, critiqued by your insurance company, and observed by an audience comprised of family and friends.

At some point on your journey, you may have asked: How did I end up here? How do I make sense of a life suddenly recast? How do I make adapt to my many role changes—some of which I didn't ask for?

These questions are at the heart of a new virtual support group I will be offering this fall: **Writing Support Group for Survivors & Caregivers**, starting in October.

**Our goal:** To recast Cancer as a minor character in your life story through exploratory writing exercises.

### What to Expect

In group, patients and caregivers will come together in a supportive online setting to better understand their cancer journey through self-exploration and self-reflection. Through writing and sharing, we will explore the feelings, roles, responsibilities, and choices associated with living with cancer. You can attend as an individual or with a loved one. All are welcome!

You will learn how to rewrite and speak of Cancer's role, so it no longer plays the main character in your life story. We will not ignore Cancer, but we will place a spotlight on other important aspects of wellbeing that make you human: relational, spiritual, emotional, vocational, physical, environmental, financial, and intellectual.

The roles you play within these areas of wellbeing are as important, if not even more important, than the role Cancer plays in your life.

Some patients have asked if they need to be a "writer" to join the group. I respond with an enthusiastic, "No!" No writing talent or experience is expected!

This group is designed to facilitate expression and exploration, **not to win a literary prize.**

### Types of Writing

During our ten sessions, participants will be introduced to five distinct types of writing: expository, descriptive, persuasive, narrative, and creative. Each of these writing styles engages the writer in different ways with the same content, enabling for greater understanding of the self and journey.

Genres will include journaling, poetry, short stories, drama, editorial, reportage, and stream of consciousness.

While all participants will be encouraged to share passages from their writing exercises, this is not a requirement. The only requirement is that what happens in group, stays in group. Confidentiality is key to developing and maintaining a safe space for everyone to explore their experiences.

### Benefits of Group & Journaling

CPSP began offering virtual support groups in 2020 in response to the global pandemic. Since that time, I have had the humbling experience of witnessing patients, caregivers, and bereaved

While scanxiety may never go away entirely, you may continue to have fears of cancer recurrence even if you have been told you are “cured.” This is a normal response to being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness.

There are many ways you can minimize the intensity and duration of scanxiety:

- Identify Your Emotions
- Acknowledge Your Fears
- Regain Control: Make Healthy Choices
- Engage in Intellectual Well-Being
- Engage in Mindfulness
- Join a Support Group
- Engage in Therapy
- Talk with your Provider

## THINGS WE FORGET PROJECT

### Mindfulness

John Kabat-Zinn provides us with an evidence-based definition:

Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally in the service of self-understanding and wisdom.

In the early 2000s, creative director JJ Penn began leaving post-it notes in public locations, with the hope that they would inspire the finder to relish a tiny nugget of remembering how to live in the here and now. It's a wonderful example of engaging in a public mindfulness practice!

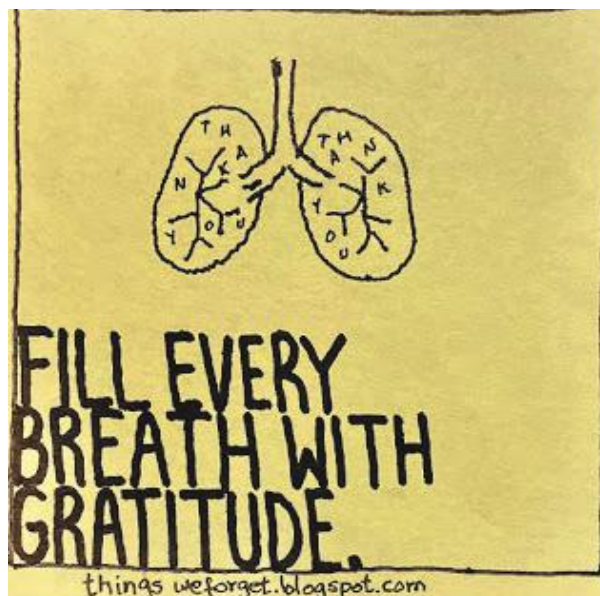
Penn photographed his hand-drawn notes and posted them on a blog for several years. In 2016, the book, [Things We Forget](#), was published. The inspiration of the entire project began “with a simple premise: It's worth remem-

bering what's most important in life, even when you can't see the bigger picture.”

In one of this fall's workshops (see page 5), we will review some of Penn's bites of wisdom and explore how remembering and cherishing the most important aspects of life is engaging in the practice of mindfulness. Here's a snapshot:

### Take Calculated Risks

Identify the pros and cons of a problem and utilize your skills to make a decision that is right for you



### Be Not an Island

Connect with others who share your beliefs. Talk to your loved ones about how you are feeling physically and emotionally.

### Make Your Day Count

How would you spend your day, if you knew you were to repeat it in a perpetual repetition? Try to live every day as if it is your only day ... live in the here and now.

### Try Something New

Stimulate your intellectual well-being by engaging in something

you have never done before—take a ballroom dance class, learn a foreign language, pick up musical instrument, learn how to watercolor ... the opportunities of endless.

### Be Afraid to be Vulnerable

Ask for help, guidance, companionship. Feeling vulnerable can be scary, but it can also expand your capacity to feel connected to others in new and supportive ways.

### TIME TO ACT

This stage on your cancer journey can be an opportunity to take back your life.

It's a time to remember life lesson you knew—and possibly shared—prior to your cancer diagnosis. Self-reflection, intentionality, and contemplation can reduce feelings of anxiety and apprehension.

The Cancer Patient Support Program offers a variety of supportive counseling services that help you learn to adapt to this phase on your cancer journey. Opportunities include individual counseling, couples counseling, support groups, art therapy, tai chi, yoga, massage, and more!

Take advantage of psychosocial support by connecting with a CPSP counselor to discuss your feelings post-treatment. To learn more about our programs, visit: <https://www.wakehealth.edu/locations/facilities/comprehensive-cancer-center/cancer-patient-support-program>

For additional information on post-treatment, visit: <https://www.cancer.net/survivorship/life-after-cancer/coping-with-fear-recurrence>.



## CHACY'S EMPLOYEE GO-TO LIST FOR HOW *NOT* TO DELAY JOY!

- Have fun and celebrate important occasions.
- Know who your tribe is and spend time with them.
- Spend time doing things that bring comfort—a faith community, a hike, some solitary time with a good book.
- Engage in a high-energy activity, such as a bike ride or a Zumba class, can help restore what has been emotionally depleted.
- Attentive self-care can renew and re-energize, so that one can bring hope and comfort to those in their care.



“IF SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU IS REAL, WE WILL PROBABLY FIND IT INTERESTING, AND IT WILL PROBABLY BE UNIVERSAL. SO YOU MUST RISK PLACING REAL EMOTION AT THE CENTER OF YOUR WORK. WRITE STRAIGHT INTO THE EMOTIONAL CENTER OF THINGS. WRITE TOWARD VULNERABILITY.”

ANNE LAMOTT, BIRD BY BIRD

### WRITING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

spouses transform difficult emotions into safe expressions of understanding, confusion, love, and, yes, even anger. In this support group, the power of expression can be experienced through dialogue and the written word.

### Journaling as an Evidence-based Practice

I introduce my individual clients to journaling due to its many proven mental health benefits including a reduction in stress and anxiety, decreased depressive symptoms, increased self-reflection and validation, improved self-efficacy and self-confidence, and ability to recognizing negative thought patterns.

Participating in a support group also offers many benefits:

1. Finding acceptance and solace from others experiencing similar life transitions.
2. Reduced feelings of loneliness and aloneness.
3. Validation of your feelings and self-acceptance.
4. Gain understanding and acceptance about your journey.
5. Learn new coping skills including mindfulness practices, exercise, journaling, and letter writing.

# Take Good Care. Family & Friends Bereavement Support Group

Thursdays, Virtual, 11 am



This 10-week bereavement group is designed for family members and friends who have lost a loved one to cancer.

Participants will reflect on their sense of identity, examine life goals and social and familial relationships, and learn how to reorganize life in a meaningful and healing way.



**Scan to register!**

Psychosocial Oncology & Cancer Patient  
Support Programs || 336-716-2394  
[wakehealth.edu/cancer support](http://wakehealth.edu/cancer-support)

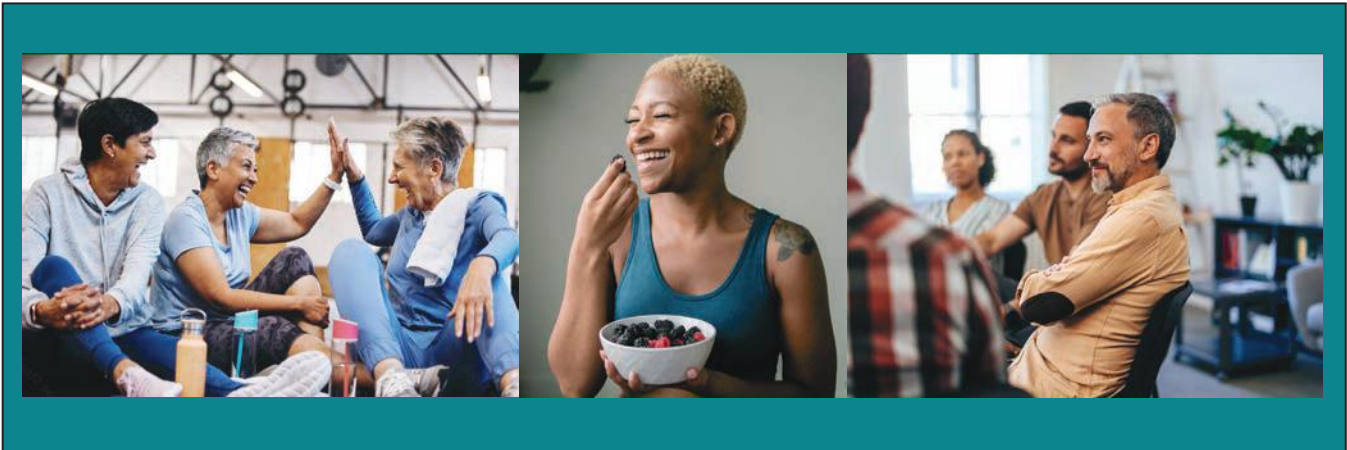


**Atrium Health**  
Wake Forest Baptist



# Group Health Coaching

## *Exercise and Nutrition Series*



Support | Solutions | Tools | Connection

### Program Highlights:

- FREE enrollment with no cost to patients
- FREE access to fitness app for self-tracking
- Open to Cancer Survivorship Clinic patients (with physician approval)

### 6-Week Series Program Overview:

- Weekly virtual group coaching sessions
- Individual coach messaging support provided between sessions
- Start date: Oct: 17<sup>th</sup> (runs through Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>)
- Offers opportunity for connection, accountability, and fun!

### What is Group Health Coaching?

A small group experience, led by a National Board-Certified Health Coach, that uses the strength of community to facilitate learning and self-discovery. Motivation strategies and communication tools along with group collaboration can lead you to gain new insights and strategies moving you close to your individual goals.

To sign up for this Group Coaching Series or for more information contact Aimee: [adepoort@wakehealth.edu](mailto:adepoort@wakehealth.edu)

