

# Resilience

## Newsletter

Psychosocial Oncology & Cancer Patient Support Programs

AHWFB



Spring 2024



## Cultivating Resilience on All Levels

*"Resilience is very different than being numb. Resilience means you experience, you feel, you fail, you hurt. You fall. But, you keep going." — Yasmin Mogahed*

Thank you for taking the time to read our spring 2024 edition of *Resilience*. One thing that piqued my interest about human behavior when I was a child was witnessing the idiosyncratic ways that individuals navigate adversity, including changes in health status. I remember wondering how individuals in my family could respond in such vastly different ways to the same external stressors. Intellectual curiosity had me turn to books; yet careful observation over time also became my close companion. This curiosity led me on a journey of wondering how to nurture my own resiliency. How is it that some people withstand arduous circumstances so remarkably?

Many of us cultivate notions of resilience that have linear trajectories, void of downward slides, backward loops, or a haze of uncertainty. Resilience, however, is not embodied solely by those who run the steady path without difficulty. Quite the contrary. Resilience entails opening oneself up to feeling fully- the successes, the disappointments, the sadness, the fear, the hope and the contentment in situations. It involves doing the best one can to navigate all that accompanies the path. And paths typically are windy. Resilient individuals strive to maintain congruence between their actions and core selves regardless of the internal and external demands of life. They move through circumstances that are challenging, albeit at their own beat. Movement sometimes consists of reflection, emoting or overt action.

Oncology journeys for both patients and providers can be full of a range of emotions and experiences along the way. Being open to feeling, processing, and attending to these contextualized emotions allows us to act on them fully to work towards our best lives under our respective circumstances. Resilience is embodied by those who keep moving towards their best quality of life in a manner that is congruent with their values and goals, often through the struggle. For patients, this may equate to altering daily routines, readjusting expectations, having patience with oneself, prioritizing long-awaited experiences or even making the decision to stop treatment altogether to preserve quality of life. We hope to support the fostering of diverse forms of resiliency to allow our patients to make decisions and move on those decisions in a manner that is congruent with their deepest hopes and wishes.

In the medical world, providers most definitely feel deeply and navigate many of these same journeys in a parallel fashion as patients. It is easy to become emotionally flooded and to be detrimentally impacted by fatigue, compassion, or a combination thereof. Supporting teammates, remaining mindful of oneself and needs, and attending to self-care is invaluable. Our Psychosocial Oncology team recently spent some time at an equine facility observing horse behavior, making connections between our own personalities and those within the equine group, attempting various strategies to motivate and lead resistant horses, and performing deep breathing with our four-legged beauties. Slowing down, connecting with one another outdoors and outside of work, drawing from the natural world, and changing our lenses has helped us to persist. Investing in ourselves and our team has been tremendous, allowing us to move forward individually and collectively. Amidst institutional changes and the usual demands of everyday living, this issue reflects on ways to take care of yourself regardless of where your path is meandering. Thanks for spending some time connecting with the great things underway here and please let us know if we can be a part of your resiliency journey.

**Katie E. Duckworth, PhD, LCMHC**  
**Director, POP/CPSP**

### Inside *Resilience*:

Barenaked  
Ladies at  
Summerlark!

New CPSP  
Projects

Provider  
Spotlight

ARCH Team

Healing Arts  
Update

Navigator  
Interviews

ACT for  
Cancer

Volunteer  
Spotlight

Health  
Coach  
Interview

Donor  
Spotlight



## 2024 SummerLark: Barenaked Ladies

Save the date for this year's **SummerLark** concert featuring Barenaked Ladies on **Saturday, May 11, 2024 at Bailey Park in downtown Winston-Salem!** Keyboardist Kevin Hearn is a cancer survivor himself; he used music as a coping skill during his diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship experience. The concert will be opened by local band Crenshaw Pentecostal and will include food trucks, a free photo booth, and a lively outdoor atmosphere. Tickets can be purchased at [giving.wakehealth.edu/Summerlark](http://giving.wakehealth.edu/Summerlark).

SummerLark is the Cancer Patient Support Program's annual fundraiser. This program is part of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist. The Cancer Patient Support Program is a group of mental health professionals who give voice to the thoughts and feelings of patients and their family members, teach coping skills, and develop, implement, and evaluate integrative programming. The fundraiser supports approximately half of the program's annual operating budget. It makes mental health for cancer patients and their family members accessible. Proceeds from SummerLark help pay for individual/couples counseling, support groups, art therapy, tai chi, yoga, massage, and compensation for visiting musicians who perform for patients receiving chemotherapy treatments at the Comprehensive Cancer Center.

SummerLark was modeled after the popular Winterlark gala and rebranded as a family-friendly outdoor event. It featured Aloe Blacc and was opened by Alex Key in 2022; last year, it featured Chris Lane and was opened by The Dryes.

**Allegacy Federal Credit Union** is this year's presenting sponsor and has been the presenting sponsor for the past three years. This year's chairs include Brian Vannoy, Senior Executive Vice President/Chief Revenue Officer of Allegacy Federal Credit Union and Dixon Douglas, Director of Partnerships and Customer Loyalty for Flow Automotive.

We invite you to consider joining us at SummerLark this year! We also appreciate donations to assist with social-emotional support for cancer patients and their family members. Donations can be made [here](#).

**Emily LaFontaine, MSW, LCSWA**

*Thank you for supporting us!*

---

# New Projects for CPSP in 2024

## **SOS Connections: Peer Support**

The Winston and Charlotte markets of Levine Cancer are co-developing a new peer support program. Implementation of the program is expected to begin in 2024. SOS Connections will offer the opportunity for cancer survivors to share their stories with individuals undergoing active treatment, and for individuals undergoing active treatment to connect with a cancer survivor who shares a similar diagnosis. Volunteer survivors and patient participants will be paired for either a one-time or an ongoing connection of at least three phone, video, and/or in-person communications. Volunteer survivors will be screened, onboarded, trained, and paired with at least one but no more than three patient participants; patient participants may later become volunteer survivors if they choose to do so. Initial target patient populations include hematology oncology, breast, and gynecological cancers. Emily Lafontaine, MSW, LCSWA is spearheading this initiative.

## **Smoking Cessation Intervention**

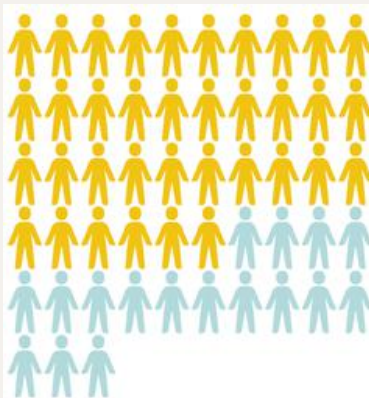
CPSP assisted with the intervention design process and preparation of the treatment manual for a research study that aims to design a novel DBT-ST (Dialectical Behavior Therapy – Skills Training) brief intervention for patients with cancer to reduce or quit smoking. Additionally, this group will conduct a mixed-methods study, in which the proposed intervention will be evaluated using the Qualitative Description method. Erica Fox, MA, LCMHC-QS, ACS, NCC, ATR-BC and Lindsay Seigenthaler, M.Ed, LCMHCA, NCC are involved in this research project.

## **Sexual Health Initiative**

Cancer and its treatments may have various effects to sexual health, a critical component of our overall well-being. It is important for survivors to communicate openly with their healthcare team about any concerns or changes they may be experiencing, more so, it is important for providers to open up space for thoughtful and safe discussion on this topic. In many cases, there are treatments that lead to biochemical changes in hormone levels or physical changes that lead to functional adjustments. In many more cases, treatment can lead to changes in body image, desire for intimacy, diminished self-concept, and interpersonal communication alterations. To enhance our competencies in sexual health and wellness, we are investing in professional development and training of teammates interested in this specialization. Caleb Evington, LCSWA, will lead this training and initiative.

## **Collaboration with the Outpatient Head & Neck Radiation Oncology Clinic**

In August 2023, the Cancer Patient Support Program began a new collaboration with Dr. Ryan Hughes, MD, in the Head and Neck Radiation Oncology clinic. Research has demonstrated that people with head and neck cancer experience higher rates of depression and anxiety, and of suicide, than the general population and others with cancer. The treatment of these cancers often impacts many of the activities that make us most human: breathing, speaking, eating (chewing and swallowing). Dr. Hughes initiated conversation with CPSP with the hope of bringing behavioral health support to the patients in his care. Since August, CPSP counselor Holly Hallman, MSW, LCSW, has been integrated into the Head and Neck Radiation Oncology for ½ day per week, joining an interdisciplinary team of physicians, speech language pathology, and nutrition. She provides brief assessment and intervention to patients undergoing radiation treatment, with the option to continue outpatient therapy after treatment ends.



FROM AUG.-DEC. 2023, HOLLY PROVIDED A TOTAL OF 53 PATIENT VISITS FOR 36 UNIQUE PATIENTS IN THE HEAD AND NECK CLINIC.





---

# Provider Spotlight

For this edition of *Resilience*, we interviewed **Allison Peterson, FNP-C**

**1. What is your oncology specialty and how long have you been practicing at AHWFB?**

Allison Peterson, FNP-C was trained at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. She has worked exclusively with stem cell transplant and cellular therapy patients at AHWFB for the past seven years and provides both inpatient and outpatient care.

**2. How have you utilized CPSP services?**

According to Allison, all prospective transplant patients are required to meet with a CPSP provider for a psycho-social assessment prior to receiving a stem cell transplant or pursuing cellular therapy such as CAR-T (Chimeric Antigen Receptor Therapy). During this assessment, patients talk with CPSP about their medical and psychiatric history, support network, coping skills, and overall emotional adaptation. This information is shared with the transplant team, who can then assess if patients "...have good coping mechanisms or if they may need additional resources throughout their upcoming health journey." Allison explained that "CPSP has also been available for my patients during times of acute crisis and as a resource both inpatient and outpatient, often on the same day." Beyond patient care, Allison also noted that "CPSP does not forget their healthcare providers! They recently provided an education session on managing difficult patient situations with the APP's [Advanced Practice Providers] on our team. They have been available to us personally as well during times of grief and have helped support our team during those difficult times."

**3. How do your patients benefit from working with one of our psychosocial oncology counselors?**

In addition to crisis care, inpatient care, and psycho-social assessments, Allison reports that "many of my patients receive ongoing [outpatient] care with CPSP. This emotional support helps them succeed medically." She noted that many patients also benefit from CPSP's financial resources, sponsored by annual philanthropic efforts. "CPSP has also have been incredible in helping to navigate external resources such as psychiatry or intensive outpatient programs for [patients who need] treatment of substance use disorders."

**Carrie Madsen, MS, LCMHC, NCC**



## SummerLark 2023



---

# Advocacy, Recovery, Compassion, and Healing (ARCH) Team



The Advocacy, Recovery, Compassion, & Healing (ARCH) team stands out for their commitment to holistic patient care. Located in the Department of Surgery, the ARCH team provides integrated addiction and mental health services to inpatients at various hospital units. Their team is comprised of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors, Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialists, Certified Peer Support Specialists, licensed supervisors, and graduate student trainees who work tirelessly to promote healing, foster connections, and champion the humanity of all patients they encounter.

## Services Provided

**Inpatient Services:** The ARCH team provides addiction and mental health counseling services on trauma, burn, and medicine inpatient service levels. The team also provides services to pediatric surgery patients (and families) and can be utilized on additional hospital services on a consultation basis. Inpatient service areas of focus include substance misuse and use disorders, trauma (acute stress, post-traumatic stress), grief/loss, and recovery support.

The ARCH team's presence and team-oriented approach allow patients to receive comprehensive care and support throughout their admission and connection to resources within the community.

**Outpatient Services:** The Trauma Connection Supportive Care & Wellness Clinic is the outpatient branch of the ARCH team's services at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist (Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Trauma Connection Supportive Care and Wellness Clinic). The clinic's mission is to offer comprehensive support and consultation for patients on their journey toward wellness and recovery, with a home base located on the 5th floor of Janeway Tower. The clinic aims to serve as a bridge, helping former patients transition back to daily living and feel empowered with resources from the community. Their outpatient clinic areas of focus similarly include acute stress/PTSD, adjustment, depression, grief/loss, and substance use.

The ARCH team and their services provide invaluable support and care for our patients and families, including those within the Comprehensive Cancer Center. Their focus and mission contribute to our institution's goal to provide comprehensive care by treating the whole person. With the work of our ARCH team and program, our institution can provide an authentic, patient-centered approach to care by addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by our patients. The Cancer Patient Support Program is proud to work alongside the ARCH team to collaboratively support, connect, and engage patients and their loved ones.



**Lindsay Seigenthaler, M.Ed, LCMHCA, NCC**



## Healing Arts Therapy Clinic: Happenings

During our Fall Provider Wellness Art Therapy Group, participants gathered to make kintsugi bowls. Kintsugi is a traditional Japanese art form of repairing broken ceramics with lacquer and gold to fill cracks in order to refine and reuse vessels. Participants explored the beautiful teachings of kintsugi such as turning adversity into resilience and embracing imperfection as they worked to mend their ceramic bowls and fill the cracks with a gold powder and glue mixture. Participants discussed how these concepts are relevant to their wellness journeys as individuals and providers in their respective disciplines. Some also decided to fill their bowls with affirmation statements of gratitude and encouragement they could share with others.  
(continued next page)

"Breaking the bowl felt very therapeutic- it was a very creative way to release stress and anxiety. Then the act of gluing it back together with the beautiful, glittery glue made it feel as though something beautiful can come out of messy or broken situations. I was able to write affirmations down and keep them in my bowl and they serve important reminders to myself as I go throughout the day. I have even had coworkers come into my office and take an affirmation out of the bowl when they feel they need one too."  
- **Emily Copus**, Population Health Navigation Manager

"I enjoy the provider wellness group, with not only my immediate team, with adjacent teams too. It gives us time to release our tension and stress to allow us to bond together on a different level. Working in the CCC is both rewarding and taxing, as we collaborate on reducing financial burdens and focus on treatment for a better quality of life for our patients. We too are human and having the shared experience lends itself to better stress management as a whole."  
- **Melinda Smith** Lead Oncology Financial Navigator-Oncology Service Line

---

## Healing Arts Therapy Clinic: Happenings (cont.)

This spring we are excited to announce a Healing Arts Therapy Clinic initiative called “Coming Together” that will be offered in our treatment PODS. This initiative will include a series of collaborative art experientials that will provide patients and caregivers an opportunity to connect with others with shared cancer experiences through visual art. The first experiential in the series includes covering two 24x36 size canvases with fabric. Participants are selecting a piece of fabric based on color or design that represents their personal experience and adhering it to one of two canvases. Our hope is to display the “Coming Together” series in the PODS for our patients and their caregivers to enjoy as we continue to foster a sense of connection through the healing arts.

**Erica Fox, MA, LCMHC-QS, ACS, NCC, ATR-BC**

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Art Therapy in the PODS:** Wednesdays 9:00am-10:30am for patients and caregivers to foster a sense of connection through art making and supporting conversation.

**Healing Arts Therapy Open Studio:** Friday from 1:00-2:30pm for patients, caregivers, providers, and volunteers to participate in art making and meaningful conversation. All art supplies are provided and no fee to participate.

**Provider Wellness Art Therapy Group:** 3rd Monday 1:00pm-2:30pm for providers of various disciplines to pause, reflect, and connect through art making and meaningful conversations. Topics explored are relevant to personal wellness, compassion fatigue, grief, and professional development.

**Inpatient Art Therapy Consults:** CPSP continues to provide medical art therapy consults and follow-ups on all CPSP inpatient services including ENT, BMT, Leuk, MICU, Surg/Onc, SICU, Gyn/Onc, HOA/B/C



## Financial Navigation

Many people experience unpleasant physical side effects of chemotherapy, radiation, and other cancer treatment options. Similarly, some people experience financial toxicity, a term that has become increasingly popular over the past several years. “Financial toxicity” describes the adverse financial side effects of cancer treatment, according to the National Cancer Institute. It can cause patients to skip appointments, take less than the prescribed dosages of medications, and reduce expenditures on food, clothing, leisure, and recreation.

**Sabrina Houser** has worked at the Hayworth Cancer Center in High Point as a financial navigator for the past two years. She hopes to decrease financial toxicity by helping patients apply for grants. She does this by keeping records of the grants offered by various foundations and nonprofit organizations. Grants open and close throughout the year as funding permits, so whenever a grant is accepting new applications, Ms. Hauser knows about it. She acts quickly by contacting the patients who have been referred to her and then walks them through the application process. She also investigates billing issues by seeking to understand why a patient’s health insurance agency denies a claim, for example.

Caring for others can be challenging, but Hauser is no stranger to self-care practices. Hauser keeps a gratitude journal and writes in it every day, usually before she starts work each morning. She unwinds by gardening, spending time with her children and grandchildren, and enjoying dinner and a movie with her family.

Hauser considers her work to be much more than a job, and she is deeply fulfilled by it. Her goal is to be “positive and encouraging” to each and every patient she encounters. She wants patients to walk away from her conversations knowing that she cares, and that others who work within the greater Oncology Service Line do, too.

*Are you interested in connecting with the financial navigation team? You can schedule an appointment by contacting Melinda Smith at 336-713-2688. You can also contact Sabrina Houser at 336-781-4856 for more information regarding grants.*

**Emily LaFontaine, MSW, LCSWA**





---

## Health Coaching



Anyone who has ever played a sport knows how important a good coach is. Coaches support learning, encourage and motivate, and stay committed, even when things get hard. When it comes to our health and making habits changes, the support of a good coach can be invaluable. In a clinical setting, medical providers not only give prescriptions for medication, but also 'behavioral prescriptions': move more, eat less or differently, get more sleep. Sounds easy, right? But we know how challenging it can be to make, and sustain, positive behavior change.

That's where health coaching comes in.

**Aimee De Poortere** is a National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach who has recently joined the team of the Comprehensive Cancer Center to initiate a new Health Coaching program for patients. The essential elements of this program emerged from a research study at AHWFB, which studied cancer patients transitioning from active treatment into survivorship. The program lasts for 12 weeks and is offered at no cost to patients. It starts with a 60-minute intake session, followed by 30-minute sessions every other week, with support available as needed between visits via chat/text. Virtual, phone, and in-person appointments are available to meet the diverse needs of patients.

Aimee works with individuals to help them identify what it would look like to thrive, and what their hopes are. She brings a diversity of experience in health and wellness, especially related to sleep/insomnia, movement, and nutrition. She has expertise in communication techniques, motivational tools, and helping individuals access their intrinsic motivation to make the changes they need. Aimee believes that most people have the answers to their own wellness inside of them, but they may need additional information and support. While she uses the National Cancer Center Network recommendations for nutrition and movement, she starts with the patient: where they feel they are, and where they want to be going. With so much that is prescribed to patients, "I try to start with something that feels fun or interesting to the patient." Aimee has found it helpful to frame goals as "experiments" while still helping patients be specific and time bound. If we do not reach a goal, then it can feel like failure.

The language of "experiment" highlights that we always have the opportunity to learn something, and that there is progress, even if we do not fully reach our goal. In all her patient interactions, Aimee seeks to empower, collaborate, enhance understanding, and reduce barriers to success.

*The AHWFB Oncology Service Line Health Coaching program is now accepting referrals. For more information, please reach out to Aimee by email at [adeport@wakehealth.edu](mailto:adeport@wakehealth.edu).*

**Holly Hallman, MSW, LCSW**



# Psychological Flexibility in ACT, part V: Acceptance



In previous editions of *Resilience*, we explored 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 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, three of which (Present-Moment Awareness, the Observer Self, and Defusion) have already been explored in this newsletter. The fourth of these components is Acceptance.

There are many popular definitions of “acceptance,” so it is important to clarify terms from the outset. In ACT, “Acceptance is the voluntary adoption of an intentionally open, receptive, flexible, non-judgmental posture with respect to our moment-to-moment experience” (Hayes et al, 2012). Basically, Acceptance is about taking a non-oppositional stance towards life: it is synonymous with willingness, i.e., the willingness to acknowledge “what is” without resistance, escapism, or denial. However, Acceptance does not mean that we like, condone, approve of, agree with, want, or desire what is happening. Acceptance is also not enduring, tolerating, white-knuckling, or resigning ourselves to our fate; nor does it imply defeat or signify failure. Rather, Acceptance in ACT is the active recognition that some challenges cannot be immediately resolved and trying to control, eliminate, or avoid “what is” typically leads to suffering.

Practicing acceptance enables cancer patients to increase feelings of empowerment and reduce suffering because they learn to be strategic about problem-solving, stop trying to control the uncontrollable, and “make space” for reality when they cannot change a situation. Imagine a breast cancer patient who values family dealing with intense fatigue following a month of radiation treatments. Naturally, the patient dislikes the fatigue and may feel irritable, notice angry thoughts, and experience a strong urge to isolate; however, doing so would disconnect her from her loved ones. By choosing to practice Acceptance skills, however, the patient acknowledges the fatigue, “makes space” for the discomfort, and still does what is important to her, e.g., go for a walk with her daughter.

Please note that in ACT, Acceptance is a practice, rather than a one-time event, and involves a series of interrelated, teachable skills. It is also selective: patients practice Acceptance only when normal problem-solving channels are ineffective or when avoidance leads them away from their values. Please continue the conversation next time when we cover Values as the fifth component of psychological flexibility in ACT.

#### References:

Hayes, S.C., K.D. Strosahl, & K.G. Wilson (2012). *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change*. 2nd Ed. New York: Guilford Press.

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

**Carrie Madsen, MS, LCMHC, NCC**



## Volunteer Spotlight

### How long have you been volunteering at the Comprehensive Cancer Center?

**Jeanne Springer** began her volunteer work at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist on Christmas Eve, 2016. In October of 2020, she began volunteering primarily at the Comprehensive Cancer Center and occasionally helps in Interventional Radiology.

### How often do you volunteer?

Jeanne volunteered twice a week for many years and more recently transitioned to once a week. She currently volunteers at the Cancer Center on Friday afternoons.

### What are ways you help support patients in your role as a volunteer?

Jeanne supports patients by assisting them with check-in procedures, finding their way around the hospital, serving snacks and drinks while waiting for appointments or during infusion treatments, and helping pass out donated. Jeanne also helps support the Interventional Radiology team by completing supportive administrative tasks.

### What is your favorite part about volunteering?

Jeanne describes her volunteer work as meaningful. She “enjoys helping others and likes getting the experience of learning new things during the process.”

### Have you engaged in any CPSP services?

Jeanne has participated in the Healing Arts Therapy Open Studio on Fridays since its inception in 2022. She enjoys making art when she is on-site and connecting with other patients, caregivers, staff, and volunteers.

**Erica Fox, MA, LCMHC-QS, ACS, NCC, ATR-BC**



---

# CPSP's Value-Added Integrated Care

## Accessibility

Efforts to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of psychosocial support are crucial in cancer care. By strategically reducing barriers to such support, individuals facing health challenges can benefit from timely interventions without unnecessary delays. Minimizing the time required for visits, cutting down on additional trips, and addressing the stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance are integral components of a patient-centered approach.

Moreover, initiatives to lower the overall cost of care contribute to a more inclusive healthcare system. By streamlining hospital stays and reducing emergency department visits, integrated psychosocial oncology behavioral health providers not only alleviate the financial burden on patients but also foster an environment where psychosocial support is readily available and seamlessly integrated into the continuum of care.

## Collaboration

Collaboration is at the core of a holistic and effective healthcare system. By fostering strong partnerships with multidisciplinary care teams, CPSP providers can ensure comprehensive and patient-centered approaches that address the 360-degree care needs of individuals.

Our collaborative efforts not only enhance the quality of care but also play a vital role in reducing vicarious trauma and burnout among fellow healthcare professionals. Furthermore, collaboration extends beyond immediate patient care to encompass teaching, researching, and institutional service. By working collectively in these domains, CPSP behavioral health providers can advance medical knowledge, improve training practices, and contribute to the overall betterment of the Atrium Health Levine Cancer healthcare ecosystem, creating a synergy that benefits both patients and healthcare professionals alike.

## Optimization

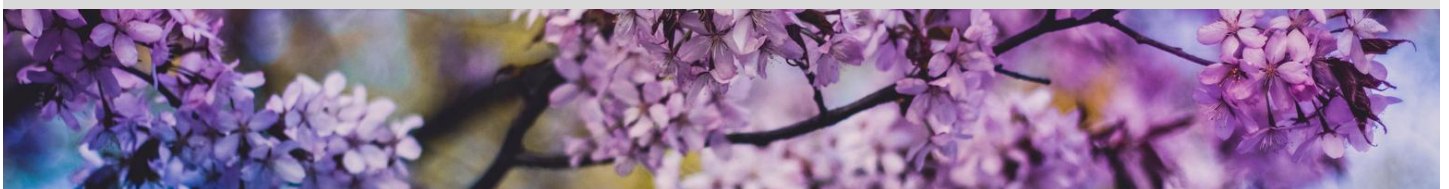
To optimize the cancer patient experience, a multifaceted approach is imperative. Streamlining access for patients, caregivers, and families ensures that essential services are readily available when needed, fostering a more patient-centered system. Improving the understanding of the assumptive world—the unique perspectives and assumptions individuals bring to their healthcare experiences—allows for more personalized and effective engagement. Tailored, specialized services can further enhance this engagement, addressing specific needs and preferences.

Considering temporal aspects in the care of inpatients is crucial, as it contributes to a more efficient and empathetic healthcare environment. Optimizing value-added services extends beyond immediate patient care and encompasses teaching, clinical trial accruals, and institutional service such as prioritizing provider wellness. Through these optimization strategies, CPSP is working collaboratively and creatively to meet the evolving needs of both patients and providers.

## Empowerment

Empowerment lies at the heart of our commitment, as we strive to enrich our community through shared knowledge and programming. We empower individuals and families by offering a diverse range of processing and healing options, including trauma-informed care, grief counseling, therapeutic support groups, and art therapy. Through these avenues, we aim to provide personalized and holistic support, recognizing the unique needs of each person on their journey.

Additionally, we invest in empowering trainees by providing valuable experiences and knowledge, nurturing the next generation of professionals dedicated to making a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. Together, these initiatives create a network of empowerment, fostering resilience and growth within our community and beyond.



---

## Nurse Navigation:

Yes, Sunshine is her given name, in honor of a beautiful sunset witnessed mere weeks before her mother learned she would soon have a daughter. From an early age, **Sunshine Poerio, RN** knew she wanted to be a nurse, asking for biology books and requesting that her family call their fingers “phalanges.” Fast forward to 2024, and Sunshine Poerio has spent more than 20 years honing her craft as a nurse, both in direct patient care and in educating nursing students. She has spent the last 4 years working as a Nurse Navigator in the AHWFB Comprehensive Cancer Center, caring for patients diagnosed with lymphoma or melanoma in the outpatient clinic setting.

What drew her to a Nurse Navigator position? The blend of patient education and advocacy, as well as the daily opportunities for meaningful human connection. “I still get to be a nurse” in the more traditional sense, while also addressing barriers that may impede patients' consistent access to high quality care and treatment. She calls each newly diagnosed patient prior to their initial visit with their oncologist, setting the tone for their engagement with oncology and helping them to know what to expect, which helps to reduce anxiety. She meets each patient in person by the time of their first treatment.

Nurse navigators identify needs, connect with resources of all kinds, and serve as a conduit between providers and patients. “You have to be genuine,” she notes, acknowledging the privilege of participating in some of the most vulnerable moments of an individual's life. All of these efforts lay the foundation for a trusting relationship that continues to grow over the duration of the patient's treatment and into survivorship. Sunshine's training and knowledge allow her to break down complex medical concepts into language that patients can more readily understand. She notes of her team that “we have a holistic approach” to caring for patients, recognizing that with a cancer diagnosis often comes much emotional distress. Her team often refers to the Cancer Patient Support Program for ongoing psychosocial support for their patients.

Sunshine loves her job, including the medical providers on her team and the patients and families she interacts with regularly. She also acknowledges the need to rest and renew at the end of the day. She loves to exercise and read; she committed to walking 100 miles per month and has achieved this goal for the past 16 months and has read 124 books in the past year. “I need to participate in things that bring me joy.”

Maybe her mother instinctively knew that her daughter would shine; she certainly shines here.



**Holly Hallman, MSW, LCSW**





## Donor Spotlight

In the heart of every community lies stories of compassion, resilience, and generosity. Meet **Bruce and Ann Milam**, two remarkable individuals whose journey with Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist (AHWFB) and the Wake Forest University community epitomizes the power of giving back.

Bruce, a proud 1951 graduate of Wake Forest, and Ann, his beloved partner, have woven their lives with threads of service and dedication. They met while both attending summer school at Wake Forest. After graduation, Bruce worked for National Cash Register before going on to work 57 years as a business owner in the farming equipment industry. Together, they traversed the landscapes of North Carolina, from Wilmington to Sunbury, and settling in Arbor Acres in Winston-Salem in 2016, where they found a deep sense of community, belonging, and appreciated healthcare.

Unfortunately, throughout their journey together, cancer has touched their lives intimately. Bruce is a cancer survivor, as he was diagnosed with prostate cancer at 69 years old. Through radiation therapy and successful surgery, Bruce was able to make a full recovery. Additionally, Ann has endured multiple close family members' journeys as well: she lost her brother to pancreatic cancer and close cousin to colon cancer. She recounts her cousin's experience being extraordinarily difficult, as she was only 32 years old when she was diagnosed with a child on the way. Ann recalls her cousin receiving a prognosis of less than a year, however, through her treatment through Wake Forest Baptist, her cousin was able to survive two years and spend invaluable time with her child.

These personal encounters with cancer have touched Bruce and Ann greatly. They are led to give by their empathy, understanding, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to make a difference. After many years of donating towards cancer research, the Milams have extended their generosity to patients and loved ones directly through the Cancer Patient Support Program. Their vision for the impact of their contribution is clear: to provide direct support to patients, caregivers, and loved ones. From transportation services and essential supplies to the provision of psychosocial and emotional support; they aim to alleviate some of the burdens that accompany the journey of cancer, with hopes of ensuring that no one walks alone.

When asked what giving back means to them, Bruce and Ann speak from the depths of gratitude and compassion. They consider themselves blessed to be in a position to give, and their generosity extends beyond financial contributions—it is about inspiring others to join the cause, to lend a helping hand wherever possible.

In a world often overshadowed by challenges, Bruce and Ann's story shines as a symbol of hope and compassion. Their journey with AHWFB reminds us that kindness knows no bounds and that even in the darkest of times, there is always an opportunity to spread light.

As we celebrate their generosity and unwavering commitment to making a difference, the Milams encourage us all to reflect on the power each of us holds to create positive change in our communities. Together, we can continue to make strides towards a brighter, healthier future.

**Lindsay Seigenthaler, M.Ed, LCMHCA, NCC**

“AFTER MANY YEARS OF DONATING TOWARDS CANCER RESEARCH, THE MILAMS HAVE EXTENDED THEIR GENEROSITY TO PATIENTS AND LOVED ONES DIRECTLY THROUGH THE CANCER PATIENT SUPPORT PROGRAM.”





---

# About the Cancer Patient Support Program



## 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

To 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** is the newsletter of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist's Psychosocial Oncology (POP) and Cancer Patient Support Program (CPSP) and is written and edited by POP/CPSP team members.

With this free publication, we seek to promote our psychosocial programming, provide psycho-education on wellness and mindfulness, and highlight the work of our integrated partners and their expertise.

Click [here](#) to learn more about our programming and access our previous newsletters.