Melissa describes, “This was such a difficult decision for me. Gilda’s has meant so much to me over the last eight years and I’ve been honored to lead this amazing organization.”

Melissa has been a tremendous director and a dedicated advocate for those we serve. We are thankful for all she has done for Gilda’s Club Westchester and are saddened to see her go. She is leaving a strong and vibrant organization which will continue to be a vital source of social and emotional support for those in our community affected by cancer.

Under her management, GCW has grown into a crucial support organization for thousands of local residents who are impacted by cancer. She has helped us strengthen our adult support services, adding individual counseling and a specialized workshop series focusing on areas such as coping skills and survivorship, to a wide variety of support groups. Recognizing a growing need in the community, we have expanded our programming for children and teens impacted by cancer and will be breaking ground on our new Center for Teen Counseling in the near future.

Melissa reflects, “So many incredible things are happening now at Gilda’s — from our new Teen Center scheduled to open next fall, to our onsite programs and all the exciting community partnerships that continue to grow! I also feel very confident in the exciting fundraising and development calendar that has been confirmed for the remainder of our fiscal year. It truly has been an honor leading Gilda’s and seeing firsthand how much the support means for so many people impacted by cancer, at such a difficult time in their lives. Thank you for all your support over the years!”

We have actively begun our search for a new Executive Director. In the meantime, Jen Scully, a long-time employee of GCW who has most recently been serving as our Senior Director of Program Administration, will take over as our interim CEO. Jen comments, “We will miss Melissa tremendously. She has truly transformed this organization while keeping to the core mission of our services. Melissa is leaving us in an incredible place and I can’t wait to see what’s next for Gilda’s Club Westchester. I look forward to overseeing Gilda’s Club Westchester as interim CEO and upholding our mission to provide free support to anyone affected by cancer.”

Illustration by Jen Scully, Director of Program Administration

Gilda’s Club Westchester offers free emotional and social support to anyone living with cancer — men, women, teens and children — along with their families and friends. Our innovative programs are an essential complement to medical care, providing individual and family counseling, support groups, workshops, education and social activities.

80 Maple Avenue, White Plains, NY 10601
Tel 914.644.8844 • Fax 914.644.8284
Did you know that there are seventeen Mental Health Professionals that facilitate support groups for Gilda’s Club Westchester?

Our facilitators bring a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience to our support groups. Gilda’s Club Westchester hosts over thirty different types of support groups for those living with cancer or post treatment, caregivers, bereaved and for children. Support groups are held at our beautiful clubhouse in White Plains, as well as offsite at several clinical and community partners throughout the county, including NewYork Presbyterian Lawrence Hospital, NewYork Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital and Bedford Playhouse.

Ed Schwartz is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and graduate of the NYU Silver School of Social Work. Ed has advanced training as a Zel-da Foster Fellow and holds a Post Master’s Certificate in Hospice and Palliative Care. He has extensive experience working with individuals with cancer. Ed facilitates our Men’s Support Group, which meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month at Gilda’s Club Westchester from 6 pm to 7:30 pm.

"With each monthly meeting, I find myself inspired by the spirit and shared purpose of the men who contribute their focused energies to each member of the group. The warm, empathic communication and openness toward one another — no matter a new or established member — combined with their use of humor makes for an incredibly welcome source of comfort and camaraderie. It is such a true pleasure to be allowed the special ninety minutes I get to spend with them each month," describes Ed.

For more information about the Men’s Group or other support groups offered at Gilda’s Club Westchester, or to register, please contact Debbie Vincent, Clinical Support Manager, 914-644-8844 x 133 or dvincent@gildasclubwestchester.org.
Dru Pyne lived a life committed to service and family. In recognition of Dru’s incredible contribution to Gilda’s Club Westchester, we are proud to dedicate the art room in the clubhouse in White Plains in her memory as a fitting and meaningful way to remember both Dru’s cherished love of art and dedication to the organization.

Dru met her future husband David at Edgemont Jr./Sr. High School, who she married in 1981. David and Dru were close friends, characterized by David as “similar in all of the right ways”. They liked to have fun and had a lot of friends in common. According to David, he is a better person because of Dru. Together they had one child Dylan, who also graduated from Edgemont Jr./Sr. High School.

Dru had a profound lifelong love of art. A passion cultivated from an early age by her mother, who had a PhD in art history, it was natural that she also majored in art history while in college. Dru was particularly fond of the post-war new art movement, which includes artists like Jasper Johns, Lowell Nesbitt and Roy Lichtenstein. Dru was able to integrate her love of art into a successful career in fashion marketing and communications for Bloomingdale’s and later Neiman Marcus. Dru also shared her enthusiasm for art with David. To this day, the home in Rye which David and Dru renovated, decorated and shared is a reminder of her spirit.

When Dru was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the spring of 2005, she joined Gilda’s Club Westchester where she found fellowship and camaraderie through her participation in a support group and yoga classes. As she continued to be exposed to Gilda’s Club’s mission and philosophy, she was motivated to deepen her engagement and consequently was invited to join the Board of Directors while she was in remission. She assisted Gilda’s Club with many significant initiatives in marketing, public relations and fundraising, and continued to be a valued, active member even throughout her recurrence and treatment. David recalls, “Gilda’s was doing fabulous work, and Dru was thrilled to be a part of it. Her commitment made me love Gilda’s Club, too.” Dru died on November 16, 2012 from ovarian cancer.

Similarly, Dru’s son Dylan expressed that, “my mother was committed to service and giving back and never let her illness get in the way of that. Her fortitude drives and inspires me to volunteer for many organizations, including Gilda’s Club. While she is no longer with us, through her role modeling of servant leadership, her impact continues.” Dru herself was impacted by good role modeling, with a legacy of volunteerism that began with her parents who were very active in Westchester County. Her mother was Director of the Neuberger Museum of Art at Purchase College and her father was on the Purchase College Council.

Melissa Lang, CEO of Gilda’s Club Westchester, described Dru as someone who was loved by everyone on staff. Her marketing, communications and public relations experience, coupled with her humanistic perspective, shaped through her personal participation in some of the programs Gilda’s Club Westchester offers, made her contributions invaluable.
Gilda’s Club Westchester is dedicated to developing programs to address unmet needs of families affected by cancer. According to Laura Moore, Director of Children, Teens & Families Program, “There is a momentous gap in support for families impacted by cancer. It is so meaningful for these parents, children and teens to come together with others who can relate and understand, providing a much-needed sense of community around a shared experience. We have heard many ideas from our families about the types of support and activities they would find most helpful. With this in mind, we are thrilled to be able to pilot several new programs this year.”

A group for parents of kids with cancer meets quarterly and provides support for the specific challenges that these parents face. A new group for moms living with cancer was developed so that mothers with cancer can attend a group with their young children; the adults can socialize and receive support, while their children have a supervised play session nearby. Parenting After a Loss meets monthly and was created to address specific concerns that newly-bereaved individuals face after losing a co-parent or child. Our Teen Support Group enjoys pizza, socialization and support throughout the year. Rounding out these new offerings is our next Family Event in January, when families will come together to cook and share dinner.

Gilda’s Club Westchester’s new Teen Center, funded by the Impact100 grant, is currently in the planning stage with a target to begin construction in 2020. Stay tuned for updates!

If you are interested in learning more about these programs, please contact Laura Moore, Director of Children, Teens and Families at 914-644-8844 or lmoore@gildasclubwestchester.org.