

Grandpa's death prompts fitness trainer to create exercise program

BY DEBORAH MOON
Jewish Review

Watching her grandfather die of lung cancer made Laura Rosencrantz feel she needed "something more" than her job of six years as a personal trainer at the Multnomah Athletic Club.

"I wanted to be able to help people," said Rosencrantz, noting that initially she wanted to volunteer to help Cancer Care Resources, the group that "swept in ... and basically held our hand" as she and her family watched her grandfather, Leonard Schnitzer, succumb to lung cancer two months after he was diagnosed.

CCR is a 5-year-old nonprofit that provides free ser-

vices to people with cancer and their families. According to Executive Director Sue Frymark, CCR offers a wide array of services to help individuals and families deal with cancer. Last year, CCR served 1,500 families.

Frymark said an estimated 18,290 cases of cancer will be diagnosed in Oregon in 2006. An estimated 10 million people nationally are living with a diagnosis of cancer, she said. While cancer survival rates have improved, Frymark said that those diagnosed with cancer live in uncertainty worrying that it might come back even 15 years later.

"Cancer has become almost a chronic illness," said Frymark. "Even those who ultimately die of cancer live longer

See **INPOWER**, page 23

InPower

WHAT: A free, individualized 12-week fitness program for cancer patients

WHO: Cancer patients currently in treatment or still suffering from side-effects of treatment

WHY: Improves strength, stamina, balance

WHERE: Mittleman Jewish Community Center

CONTACT: Cancer Care Resources, 503-528-5236 or www.cancercareresources.org

JEWISH REVIEW

INPOWER: Class aids strength, stamina, balance

Continued from page 5

with a higher quality of life. Therefore, we don't let the prognosis affect our recommendations. It's better to prepare to live a good quality of life now and not worry about how long it might be."

For Rosencrantz, improving the lives of those living with cancer became her goal.

"I woke up one morning at 3 a.m. and I knew exercise with cancer patients was what I wanted to do," she said.

So Rosencrantz began researching exercise options for cancer patients and learned not much existed. She visited the WellFit exercise program for cancer patients in Santa Barbara, Calif., and the Rocky Mountain Cancer Institute at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colo. And she spent six months developing assessment procedures and policies before launching a pilot program in March.

"I knew I would be helping people, but I had no idea to what extent," said Rosencrantz, calling the results of the final assessment of the clients in the pilot project "far past my expectations."

Overall, the 10 people in the pilot program saw an average strength increase of 54 percent and a 53 percent increase in cardio-vascular endurance in three months.

Improved balance is another physical benefit of the program, said Rosemary McDermott, the CCR co-founder and oncology nurse who staffs the program with Rosencrantz.

"I wasn't sure it (improved balance) would happen," said McDermott, who has 30 years experience as an oncology nurse.

McDermott described the improvement in one woman who began the program needing a cane. At the initial baseline evaluation, McDermott said she had to stand behind and help balance the woman as she did the step test. At the end of the 12-week program, McDermott said the woman did 70 steps without being spotted and was able to walk without her cane.

"She had been falling; now she is able to recover quickly," said McDermott.

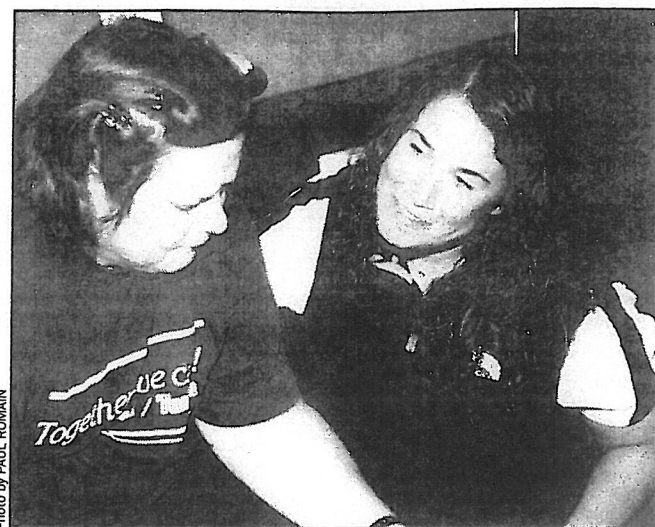


Photo by PAUL ROMAIN

LAURA ROSENCRANTZ, right, works with InPower participant **Linda Burkhart**.

The exercise program also strengthens people emotionally and mentally, she said.

"They've been through a battle, now they can rebuild and get strong," she said. "It also helps them get strong emotionally and mentally as they see the progress."

Rosencrantz concurred: "I knew I would be helping them physically getting strong. But the psychological and emotional impact of this class has been astounding. To see them smile and be excited about the future is wonderful. They have so much life in them it is really inspiring."

Rosencrantz is now on CCR's staff as their fitness director. She and McDermott run a 12-week exercise program at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Since Rosencrantz customizes the program for each client, people may join the program at any time.

McDermott said with the addition of Rosencrantz and her InPower program, CCR now meets all four areas the founders set out to address five and a half years ago. Education, counseling, nutrition and exercise were those core areas.

All three women agreed that the MJCC has played an important role in the success of the program. The MJCC provides free access to its new fitness equipment for class participants and a classroom for the half-hour relaxation exercises that conclude each session.

"Having it at Mittleman has been one of the keys to its success," said Frymark. "People are self-conscious about their limitations. Having it at a community center feels like a

more caring community."

She added the free space has been "a real factor to being able to do this."

McDermott said CCR and the InPower participants are grateful to the MJCC for providing the space.

"The MJCC was my first choice to have the program," said Rosencrantz. "That's where I grew up and where all my favorite memories are. Their generosity has been overwhelming. ... Their staff are unbelievable. They make it a comfortable, inviting environment."

MJCC Director of Advancement Lisa Horowitz said, "This is one of the things I'm proudest of our doing. It's a great program."

In addition to the MJCC's donation of space and equipment use, the program is funded by several grants. Funding for InPower is provided by the Jennifer Rosenthal Fund at CCR, the Oregon Community Foundation, Schnitzer Investment Corp. Charitable Fund, Providence Community Health Fund and Amgen Healthcare Institute.

Rosencrantz said that the Rosenthal fund, which helped fund the pilot program, was started by the father of her friend Jennifer Rosenthal, who died of leukemia in 1998.

"She was a best friend of mine," said Rosencrantz. "We went to preschool together, gymnastics, day camp, BB camp. We were in Hertz chapter of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization) together. She was an amazingly strong courageous and compassionate friend that was an inspiration to everyone who knew her."