



April 8, 2014

Dear Friend:

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Carol Lennon

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**Because you are an important part of the Gilda's Club community, we are writing to let you know that Gilda's Club Western Pennsylvania (GCWP) has decided to become independent from the Cancer Support Community (CSC).** We would like to share with you what led us to this decision because we want you to feel assured that this decision was made with the best interest of our members in mind.

Gilda's Club Worldwide ceased to operate in 2009 due to financial difficulties and, later that year, The Wellness Communities and Gilda's Clubs merged to form a new national organization, Cancer Support Community. We had high hopes that this affiliation would enable us to stay true to our mission of offering social and emotional support to those in our region touched by cancer.

We established a strategic planning committee in 2010. This group thoughtfully and carefully analyzed all factors associated with affiliation. We were hopeful that CSC would agree to amend our license agreement to guarantee the following:

- 1) GCWP would never have to relinquish the Gilda brand and become CSC.
- 2) We would not be mandated to have our members participate in studies either conducted by CSC or sanctioned by CSC. For example, CSC is mandating that in 2015, all affiliate members diagnosed with cancer must participate in a distress screening conducted at the affiliate level. In addition to costs and other resources associated with this requirement, we do not believe this supports our mission.
- 3) We would be assured that our 7 county region would remain our service area. CSC recently created a for-profit subsidiary through which they are now marketing various products, including a distress screening tool, and they are in contact with hospitals and health care systems across the country, including Western Pennsylvania, to introduce their brand.

**CSC advised that they would not accept any amendments to the license agreement.** This left us with no choice but to step away. Of critical importance to GCWP is our mission and philosophy that social and emotional support is as important as medical care in the treatment of cancer. We recognize and value the importance of research and know that we are in a region where others are doing outstanding work in the field of cancer research. It has always been our belief that our members come to GCWP because they are looking for support and a place where they can feel at home. **Any mandate to require members to become involved in studies is not something we can or will support.**

**Because CSC owns the Gilda's Club brand and will not permit us to keep our name, we will no longer be known as Gilda's Club Western Pennsylvania.** We can assure you that even though CSC will not let us keep the Gilda Radner name, we will still keep Gilda in our hearts and operate with her original mission in mind.

She will continue to drive us to meet and exceed the needs of our members and others in our region facing a cancer diagnosis. Gilda Radner was the inspiration that led so many of us to take the first step to learn about Gilda's Club. **We will strive to maintain her legacy as we move forward.**

**Our Clubhouse is a name that we feel will resonate with all of those who have come to know our organization.** Our members often comment that this is indeed their place and their Clubhouse. **It was important to us that our new name reflects the experience people have here.** Our Clubhouse does that and so much more.

When we opened our doors to the community, we promised that we would create a Clubhouse that was so warm and welcoming that it felt like a second home for all. **Our Clubhouse is truly a place for all touched by cancer.** We realize that change is never easy, but we are excited about our bright new future, one where we have full independence to provide care and support to members of our local community. Our mission, philosophy, and activities will not change and Gilda Radner will continue to inspire us.

We understand that you may wish to learn more about our direction. **We invite you to an open house on Wednesday, April 16 from 2-4 pm or 5-7 pm to meet with staff and board members.** Light refreshments will be served and you will be encouraged to ask questions, share concerns and comments.

On behalf of the board and staff, thank you for your loyal support. We hope we can count on your continued support of Our Clubhouse now and in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Carol Lennon  
Executive Director



Robin J. Bernstein, Esq.  
Board Chair