

STORIES FROM THE Y



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FINDING STRENGTH AT THE Y



Brigitte Sarnoff

Brigitte Sarnoff had never been much of a fitness buff. Busy with family, a fulfilling career and volunteerism, she stayed away from gyms or any form of physical activity. So when Dr. Randy Stevens, Director of Radiation Therapy at White Plains Hospital, encouraged Brigitte to join **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA to deal with the lingering effects of cancer treatment, she balked.

"I immediately thought of reasons I couldn't participate," she laughingly told a Rye Y staffperson. "It was too far. But it was right here in Rye. It was too expensive. But it was free of charge. I ran out of reasons!"

A resident of Rye for nearly forty years, Brigitte, 67, had suffered through a one-two cancer punch. After aggressive treatment for uterine cancer in 1999, she was placed on hormone therapy. Then, in 2007, Brigitte received a diagnosis of breast cancer. Although it was caught early, she was required to take the drug Tamoxifen to prevent a reoccurrence. Tamoxifen's side effects—leg pain and extreme achiness—and Dr. Stevens' advice wore away Brigitte's resistance to an exercise program. In February 2012, Brigitte sat down with Barbara Hughes for a **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA intake interview.

Launched at the Rye Y in 2011, **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA is a free 12-week small group program that allows cancer survivors to reclaim their total health. Brigitte didn't know what to expect when she walked through the Y's doors, but she knew she wanted to reduce pain and "just feel better."

"I had a wonderful interview," she remarked, adding that she developed an "instant friendship" with Barbara, the Y's long-time Director of Member Services. "What impressed me most is that the structure of the program exposes you to a variety of types of exercise in a non-judgmental atmosphere with adaptations made to your particular situation."

"I love the instructors," Brigitte continued. "They're just so caring and kind. I was afraid of the machines. The treadmills scared me. But the trainers stood right there beside me. And I enjoyed the group camaraderie. **LIVESTRONG** has been such a gift. I've definitely improved my endurance, my flexibility, my balance. I'm just stronger. I feel better. And I've discovered Zumba!"

An effusive and warm woman—she is currently the co-president of the Rye-based Helping Hands for the Homeless and Hungry—Brigitte has found ways to give as well as receive. "The emotional part [of cancer] is not an issue for me. I think I've been able to help some of the other ladies here."

Although Brigitte "graduated" from **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA in May 2012, she has joined the Y and thrown herself into a new exercise routine that includes Zumba, Limbercize and Group Active classes, and work-outs on the treadmill and recumbent bike. Since March of last year, Brigitte's blood pressure has dropped. "That makes all my doctors happy," she exclaimed. Looking back on her experience with **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA, Brigitte remarked "I'm just so thankful for the program."

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Stories from participants in the YMCA's **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program, a free group wellness program for cancer survivors.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Almost everyone has been touched by cancer: a friend, a parent, a spouse or even one's own brush with this terrible disease. Our **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program helps cancer survivors at different points on the road to recovery reclaim their total health.



In this issue of Rye Y Stories, we share their stories. We hope that you are as impressed by their optimism and determination as we have been.

Sincerely,
Gregg Howells
Executive Director

LIVESTRONG AT THE YMCA is a **FREE** 12-week, small group program designed for adult cancer survivors. Participants work with Y staff who are trained in supportive cancer care to safely achieve their goals, including building muscle mass and strength; increasing flexibility and endurance; and improving confidence and self-esteem.

By focusing on the whole person and not the disease, **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA is helping people move beyond cancer in spirit, mind and body.

Charlie Dumas



When I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma in September 2010, I stopped going to the gym, partly because it had become unaffordable and partly because the diagnosis gave me an excuse. I wasn't eating correctly, mostly cheaper comfort food. I had let myself go.

In May 2012, I joined the **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA class. The supportive atmosphere at the Rye YMCA made a big difference. During the **LIVESTRONG** program, I found out about the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program and my wife and I signed up. The Diabetes Prevention Program helped turn my life around. There I was accountable for my progress. I've been so pleased with the results and the support I've received.

LIVESTRONG started me on the road to health.

Louise Kuklis

The minute I walked into the Y I was so impressed by the welcoming environment.

I've always been intimidated by the competitive environment in gyms. The staff here all made me feel welcome and comfortable – from the people at the front desk to upstairs

in the Fitness Center. I love seeing so many ages and stages – from little kids to older people – mingling together. It was great to see how the Y was a lifeline during the storm. I really felt like I was a part of a community.



I started **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA in September and it has been terrific. I still get chemo once a month and everyone in the program has been very flexible and supportive about that. I've been encouraged to push myself and try new things. I never thought I could use weight machines or participate in a Zumba or a Spin class. I've cycled before but the idea of a Spin class seemed so scary until I did it here. All my life my arms have jiggled and now the muscles in my arms are really getting strong!

In the past, I was somebody who was the last person picked for sports. I always felt like the klutz. This is the first place where I've felt like I can be a fit person.



Photo by Alex Davitt

Rye Y Staff participating in LIVESTRONG Day

Lisa Steward



I was always physically active. I did Pilates twice a week and walked three miles every day. But in December 2008, I was forced into early retirement by the company

I worked for. I was very depressed staying at home doing nothing. In 2009, I was diagnosed with breast cancer for the second time and had my hip replaced.

I loved being in the **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program. The work-outs were great. The people were very nice. Exercising helped me with the depression. I really enjoyed coming to the YMCA every week and going to the Wainwright House for the Zumba and Limbercize classes. My thanks to all at the Rye Y.



Photo by Lester Millman

LIVESTRONG Day at the Rye YMCA

Claire Nagy

Although I had been swimming at the Y for 2-3 years, I felt that I needed more exercise. In addition to the breast cancer, I had heart surgery two times and I felt sluggish—I was not physically fit. In the beginning of the **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program, I got overwhelmed.

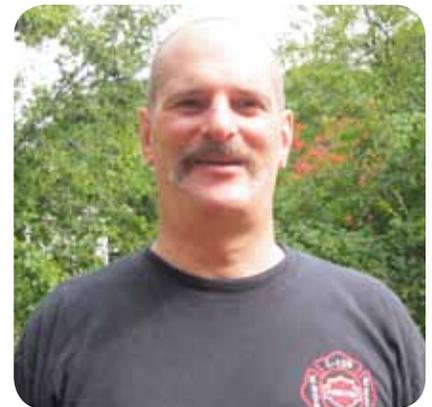


I wished I could be finished soon!

At the end, I was happy I went through it because I got stronger and have better muscle tone. I also learned how to exercise. Before, I just sat on the machine and biked and biked. But through the program I learned more efficient ways to use the machine. I can take what I learned and use it when I exercise now. Everybody was nice, they motivated us.

Fred Garner

It's nice that all of the **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA participants are on common ground and we can all have that one common factor. It is a nice way to build friendships. They understand what you're going through and you understand what they're going through.



The medication and treatment for cancer is difficult physically and mentally. **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA covers Mind, Body, Spirit - taking care of the whole person.

I appreciate all who have made this program a success. The program truly changed my life and is helping me fight cancer that has returned once again.

Sharon Lawyer



For me the **LIVESTRONG** program provided the bridge to true survivorship. After a year of treatment, I was weary of my identity as a cancer patient but at the same time fearful of life without the support of the cancer team and the medications that healed me. Now was the time for me to take charge but I

was clueless how to live with, or without, the cancer in my new body.

LIVESTRONG at the Y guided me through this difficult time and helped me to realize potential I never knew I had. One of the best parts of the program is that we rarely talk about cancer but rather learn to live life with a new purpose. My thanks to the "girls of summer" and the staff. It was, and is, great fun.

Virginia Rahilly



Before joining the **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program, my balance was unstable and I was fatigued. But joining the program was the best thing I did. I have been able to do more and I now take swimming lessons at the Rye Y. Since participating in the

program I do not tire as easily and I come to the Y when able for exercise. The staff were wonderful, helpful and encouraging.

If you would like to learn more about the Rye Y's **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program or make a donation to the program, please visit www.ryeymca.org/livestrong.htm or call 914-967-6363.



Instructor Ryan Hogan with Virginia Rahilly

Photo by Alex Davitt

Jayne Galasso



LIVESTRONG at the YMCA restored my sense of strength.

After six months of chemotherapy and five weeks of radiation, I was very run down, mentally and physically. The workouts AND the companionship of my fellow participants not only returned me to a

better sense of well-being, but a bit stronger than before my diagnosis. The program made me realize that when I'm feeling tired (or maybe lazy), I can still put on my sneakers and go for a walk or pop in an exercise or yoga video. I don't think I can say it enough...the program is WONDERFUL.