





**weSPARK**  
Cancer Support Center

13520 Ventura Blvd.  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

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# The weSPARK Beam

Cancer Support Center • Experience weSPARK

Volume 7, Issue 2

SHERMAN OAKS • SANTA CLARITA

Summer 2009



## Words from weSPARK

### Dr. Stephen Lottenberg Hosting a Special Men's Cancer Workshop

Hearing the words 'you have cancer' changes your life forever. Most patients are overwhelmed by the diagnosis, treatment and a fear of the unknown. Dr. Stephen Lottenberg, MD, PsyD, who is based at The Wellness Community in Redondo Beach, understands the emotional, physical and financial toll that cancer brings to a family. After his wife, Hilary, was diagnosed with lymphoma after their first year of marriage almost 15 years ago, Dr. Lottenberg realized the average person doesn't have access to the resources they need or the ability to contact specialists and deal effectively with insurance companies. Following Hilary's challenge with the disease, Dr. Lottenberg dedicated his career to helping cancer patients and their family members. "I found my calling when my wife was sick; I wanted to reach out and help others through this very difficult journey," he said. Dr. Lottenberg has extensive experience in facilitating support groups at The Wellness Community, including Long Beach Memorial Hospital and Kaiser Harbor Medical Center. One area of his expertise is assisting men and emphasizing how to work together through a sudden diagnosis of cancer and how to cope with a 'new normal' of living with cancer before, during and after treatment.

The doctor knows that cancer patients often feel hopeless, even if their prognosis is good. "My group counseling sessions provide an outlet where men who are suffering from

WORDS FROM weSPARK, continued on page 7

## Cancer Research Update

by Lilliane Ballesteros



### PARP Inhibitor

Doctors at the Breakthrough Research Center have found that a new cancer treatment working as a PARP inhibitor has resulted in tumor shrinkage and decreased treatment side effects for cancer patients carrying the BRCA1 and BRCA 2 genes. The inhibitor had no effect on patients not carrying the mutated genes.

The study, which was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on June 28, found that the PARP inhibitor led cancer cells to die by hindering their ability to regenerate. Additionally, the drug has resulted in decreased nausea and hair loss in patients undergoing cancer treatment.

The drug is the latest in an ongoing attempt to stop the growth of cancer cells in patients with BRCA1 and BRCA2, commonly referred to as the cancer gene. The gene came into light in 1994, when scientists at Myriad Genetics found that the gene could be linked to up to ten percent of all cancers, and was especially linked to breast, ovarian and prostate cancer. The BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes work to regenerate cancer cells.

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Our Founder,  
Wendie Jo Sperber



## Schedule At-A-Glance:

### MONDAY

9am-2pm Return to Wholeness \*\*by appointment\*\*  
10am-3pm Reiki \*\*by appointment\*\*  
11:00am Mah Jongg - (taught & played)  
3:15pm Reiki \*\*by appointment\*\*  
4-5:30pm Children's Groups  
6:00pm Teen Support Group  
6:30pm Grief Support Group - For Widows, Widowers, Partners  
7:00pm Caregiver's Support Group  
7:00pm Restorative Yoga  
(4th Monday of the Month)

### TUESDAY

9am-1pm Return to Wholeness \*\*by appointment\*\*  
10:00am Tai Chi - Beginners Welcome  
10am-3pm Reiki \*\*by appointment\*\*  
11:00am Creative Writing Group  
11:00am Kundalini Yoga  
3:00pm Post Treatment Support Group  
4:30pm Kundalini Yoga  
6:00pm Post Treatment Support Group - Co-Ed  
6pm-8pm Reiki \*\*by appointment\*\*  
7:00pm Post Treatment Support Group - Women

### WEDNESDAY

9am-3pm Qi gong Energy Sessions \*\*by appointment\*\*  
9:30am NET \*\*by appointment\*\*  
10:30am Yoga  
11:30am Guided Imagery  
12:30pm Ongoing Treatment Support Group - Co-Ed  
3:00pm Mindful Yoga  
6:00pm Breast Cancer Networking Group  
(3rd Wednesday of the month)  
6:30pm Grief Support Group - For Widows, Widowers, Partners  
7:00pm Look Good / Feel Better  
(2nd Wednesday of the month)

### THURSDAY

10:00am Yoga  
12:00pm In-Treatment Support Group  
12:00pm Post Treatment Support Group  
2:00pm Tai Chi - Beginners welcome  
3:00pm Mindful Yoga  
4:30pm Guided Imagery  
6:00pm Grief Support Group - For family members  
6:00pm Caregiver's Support Group

### FRIDAY

9:00am Integrated Energy Sessions \*\*by appointment\*\*  
11:00am Kundalini Yoga  
11:00am Ongoing Treatment Support Group - Co-ed  
2:00pm Stretching with Meditation

### DAILY

10am-3pm Equine Assisted Therapy (Call Robin @ El Dustberry Ranch 818-995-0277)

\*call for details and to reserve space.  
\*\*Intake and sign up required for all programs



## Please Save the Date

for two of our biggest events of 2009:

**October 5 – 11th Annual Wendie Jo Sperber Golf Classic –**

NEW LOCATION THIS YEAR! To be held at Woodland Hills Golf Course, Woodland Hills, CA.

**November 8th – Our 1st Annual**

**"weWALK, weRUN, weSPARK"**

**5k and 10k Run Walk** at Balboa Park.

Please stop by to see us and our booth at the **"Taste of Encino"** on **October 11th** and the **"Sherman Oaks Street Fair"** on **October 18th**.

## weSPARK Wishlist

Are you looking to contribute to weSPARK? You can help us by donating any of the following items on our weWISH List:

- New patio furniture
- Comfortable living room furniture for our group room
- Professional photocopy machine
- New vacuum
- Office supplies
- New carpeting or remnants
- Portable air conditioner
- Eco-friendly house wares





Rachel Beller, MS, RD

## Avocados: The Healthy Fat



The Avocado's Absorption Advantage Avocados: The Absorption Aid

At the Beller Nutritional Institute we believe a little bit of fat goes a long way to help your body absorb disease-fighting nutrients. In a study published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, Ohio State University researchers found that avocados, which are rich in monounsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids, can help the body absorb nutrients that protect against heart disease, cancer and blindness. More specifically, the researchers found that eating avocados can help your body absorb important fat-soluble nutrients in tomatoes. In the study people who added an avocado to their salsa absorbed nearly 4.5 times more cancer-fighting lycopene and 2.5 times more beta-carotene, which also helps protect against cancer and heart disease. Don't like salsa? The study also found that people who added an avocado to a salad of romaine lettuce, carrots and spinach absorbed seven times more immune-boosting alpha-carotene and 15 times more beta-carotene than their counterparts. But remember, even "healthy" foods need to be consumed in moderate portions because undesirable weight gain can cause negative effects. One medium avocado contains about 300 calories, so make sure you think about how this nutritious fruit fits into your personal nutritional system rather than simply adding it to your diet. If you're watching your waistline and still want to reap the benefits of healthy fats, our patients love this simple recipe for a creamy salad dressing:

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsp guacamole
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

### PREPARATION:

- Mix guacamole and lemon juice



Since this dressing has a modest 60 calories, it not only provides the protective benefits of healthy fats, but also helps eaters watch their waistline at the same time.

Avocado fat is not the only healthy fat, either. Don't like avocados? Do like the Romans do and try using a touch of olive oil when cooking tomatoes. It, too, enhances the absorption of lycopene from the tomatoes. ▲

Dear Guests and Friends of weSPARK,

I am writing this letter to let you know that due to the current financial climate and based on our continued desire to support weSPARK guests, we have decided to eliminate the position of Executive Director. In lieu of this position, weSPARK will be managed by an Executive Committee. This Committee will have three components: Nancy Allen will oversee Program Development, Outreach, and Personnel; Pam Rivera will manage Operations and Finances; Arlene Waters will be in charge of Development and Special Events. I will be available to the Committee to lend support and guidance during this transition.

The Executive Board is confident in the ability of this Committee and remains dedicated to serving our community. Please know that as President of the Board, I believe in weSPARK's mission and that these changes are meant to ensure that weSPARK will continue to thrive and will remain a very special place where cancer patients, their families and friends can receive support in a loving and nurturing environment.

Very truly yours,

*David Green*  
David Green

President of the Board of Directors



### Founder:

Wendie Jo Sperber

### Board of Trustees:

- Cindy Crawford, Model/Actress
- Rande Gerber, Entrepreneur
- Sam Gores, Chairman/CEO, Paradigm; Talent & Literary Agency
- Tom Hanks, Actor/President; Playtone Entertainment
- Burt Sperber, Chairman/CEO, ValleyCrest Companies
- Charlene Sperber, Philanthropist
- Robert Zemeckis, Director

### Board of Directors:

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- Richard Centolella
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### Medical & Counseling Advisory Board

- Rachel Beller, M.S., R.D.
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- David Hoffman, M.D.
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- Karen Morin, R.N., O.C.N.
- Marie Ritz, LCSW, *Clinical Advisor*
- Christy A. Russell, M.D.
- Michael Topp, M.A., M.F.T.
- Jay Udani, M.D.

### Staff:

- Nancy Allen  
*Program Director*
- Marti Baer  
*Public Relations / Special Event Manager*
- Bonnie Franklin, MS, MFT  
*Guest Services Manager*
- Pam Rivera  
*Operations and Finance Director*
- Tara Shore, JD, MA  
*Santa Clarita Coordinator*
- Arlene Waters  
*Development Director*
- Lea Salvatore  
*Program/Outreach Coordinator*
- Alexandra Schoch  
*Program and Clerical Assistant*
- Breanna Hoisington  
*Outreach and Clerical Assistant*

## weSPARK

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weSPARK Santa Clarita (661) 288-2322

WORDS FROM weSPARK, continued from page 1

prostate and other cancers can share their thoughts about what they are going through and leave something in the room. I want them to feel empowered and in charge of the situation. While my patients may initially think that all is lost, I explain that a new phase of their lives has just started, albeit one that began in the form of a very scary diagnosis. Human beings are most motivated to 'grow our souls' when faced with adversity and during my workshops, I want to emphasize the power of that feeling."

"The groups also provide an important outlet where members can get something off their chest and learn how to formulate clear questions for their doctors, navigate treatments and find resources to help with insurance and financial arrangements. If someone needs to change medical centers or get a second or third opinion, they will have the tools and clarity to accomplish these important tasks. My goal is for each participant to become their own counselor and in fact, many patients who have successful recoveries stay involved to become mentors and offer support to new group members," Dr. Lottenberg explained.

"The power of the group lets our members know they are in a safe place to express their emotions and get their feelings out there. After even a short time, it's amazing how quickly men will open up and work together, ultimately becoming more group-oriented during the process. If you get the chance to just talk about your problems that can actually take a lot of weight off your shoulders—venting can make you feel better."

"I tell my patients this is a phase. Life is full of road blocks and sometimes the cells that are always changing in our bodies turn to cancer and we need to deal with it head-on. Every cancer patient knows that life will never be the same but this refrain is key: This cancer is not going to run my life. I am not cancer; I have some cancer in part of my body. My mind and soul and heart are here and I can still decide how I want to approach this phase of my life."

*Dr. Lottenberg will be facilitating a new men's cancer support group at weSPARK beginning on Thursdays in September: "Quality of Life Issues in Men with Cancer: Strategies for Coping with Diagnosis and Side Effects from Treatment." Call in late August for more information. Dr. Lottenberg and his wife Hilary live in Los Angeles and are doting parents to their 10-year old daughter, Hannah. ▲*

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Lead investigator Dr. Andrew Tutt, and a select group of doctors at the Breakthrough Research Center, started studying the effects of the PARP inhibitor in 2005, and found that the BRCA genes were highly sensitive to the PARP inhibitor.

According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 60 patients were enrolled and treated for the trial. Of those, 22 patients carried the BRCA1 or BRCA 2 gene. Tumor shrinkage and a decrease in treatment side effects were found in those carrying the mutation genes. A common side effect, however, was found as patients taking the inhibitor suffered indigestion.

According to specialists, the drug is still being studied for its effectiveness and other potential side effects. Further research needs to be done before the drug can be approved as a fully effective, safe treatment for cancer patients. ▲

KENNY, continued from page 3



Rankin created with his unusual voice made a unique connection with the audience. He lived the song as he performed it. Kenny was also a very fine songwriter and lyrics meant a lot to him. I recently heard some songs that he had not yet recorded, and his stories were great.

His work was the most important thing to Kenny. Playing the guitar, writing and singing songs were his life. Rankin was not the type of player who would ever fill-in a song with a lick or sing a note that didn't work or fit the song.

In an article by Don Heckman of the Los Angeles Times, Kenny was quoted saying, "When I started, I was very young and felt like I was the center of the universe. But over the years I've come to understand that it's not about me. It's about the work and about having the opportunity to do good work."

Kenny Rankin, a modern troubadour, guitarist, song composer, and one-of-a-kind singer of love songs, died of cancer, in Los Angeles at the age of sixty-nine. Kenny was unforgettable and his performances were spellbinding and always in a class all their own! ▲

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

Help us keep our library stocked and in order.

If interested, please contact  
Karen Morin, R.N., O.C.N.  
at (818) 906-3022.





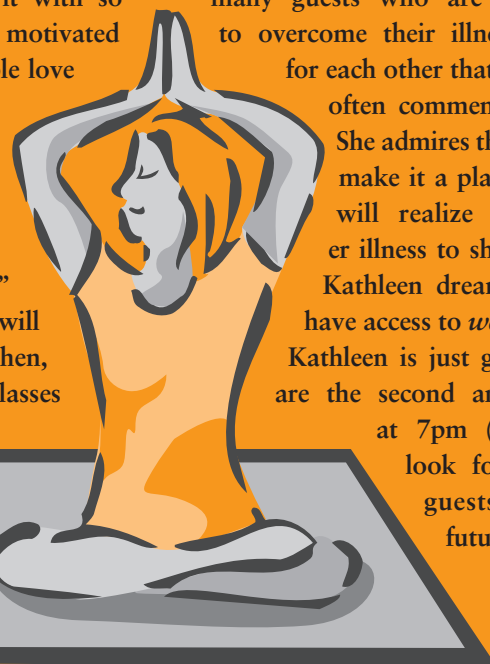
# Santa Clarita Valley Happenings

## weSPARK Guests Meditate in Santa Clarita

by Tara Shore, JD, MA

Fate took Kathleen Fletcher to Santa Barbara where some new doctors introduced her to alternative healing. Having already earned a degree from the Motivational Hypnosis Institute and a Masters in Religious Studies, Kathleen was open to experiences which concentrated on reducing allergies and adverse medical reactions without the use of traditional medications. Instead, the focus was on complementary healing modalities such as acupuncture, massage therapy and Reiki. As her symptoms began to dissipate, Kathleen began a new quest to study and master these healing modalities. She joined the Foundation for Conscious Evolution and spent three years in Santa Barbara volunteering and participating in studies using quantum physics, meditation, prayer and conscious living practices. Illness had come into her life to show her that there is a higher truth, whether or not we understand it. Using concepts like meditation, exercise, gratitude, breathing and visualizations, setting intentions and understanding the body in terms of energy vibrations which use the mind to rid the body of illness, Kathleen understood that there are ways for people to evolve faster, even without a precipitating catastrophe. Kathleen learned to "live in residence with the universe at all times." This means that she accepted her own internal vibrations in this world and allowed them to attract things to her. The Laws of Attraction which were recently described in the movie, *The Secret*, followed the studies that were undertaken in Santa Barbara. On a personal note, Kathleen learned to receive what the universe is offering. This conscious evolution not only motivated her to overcome her illness but motivated her to become proficient in studying and teaching others to find their own paths.

In addition to the more than 30 certifications in alternative healing that Kathleen has earned over the years, she is a strong believer in meditation. Kathleen has been teaching meditation at weSPARK in Santa Clarita where the guests adore her classes. Kathleen also enjoys teaching our guests. "As soon as I walked in the door, I felt the love that exists here. I feel a kindred spirit with so many guests who are eager to learn like I was and who are very motivated to overcome their illness." The guests at weSPARK show a tangible love for each other that Kathleen respects and admires. Kathleen often comments on the light she sees within each guest. She admires the willingness of people at weSPARK to make it a place of true healing. "Eventually, the world will realize that you er illness to share information about healing ourselves." Kathleen dreams of the day when everyone who wants it will have access to weSPARK's wonderful programming. Until then, Kathleen is just glad to be a part of it. Her meditation classes are the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7pm (following Restorative Yoga) and we look forward to Kathleen teaching our guests other healing tools in the future. ▲



## Santa Clarita Valley Schedule At-A-Glance:

### MONDAY

- 11:00am In-Treatment Support Group  
Facilitated by Tara Shore, MA
- 1:00pm Kundalini Yoga  
Facilitated by Lisa Weill
- 4:00pm Children's Group  
Facilitated by Tara Shore & Sharon Earle
- 6:00pm Post-Treatment Support Group  
Facilitated by Tara Shore, MA
- 7:30pm Gentle Yoga  
Facilitated by Susie Jacobson

### TUESDAY

- 9:30am Integrative Yoga  
Facilitated by Susie Jacobson
- 11:00am Metastatic Support Group  
Facilitated by Sharon Earle, LMFT
- 1:00pm Tai Chi  
Taught by Dave Burgett & Michael Watson
- 6:00pm Caregivers Support Group  
Facilitated by Sharon Earle, LMFT

### WEDNESDAY

- 11:30am Kundalini Yoga  
Facilitated by Lisa Weill
- 10:00am Post-Treatment Support Group  
Facilitated by Tara Shore, MA
- 6:00pm Restorative Yoga (2nd & 4th Wednesday of every month)  
Facilitated by Lisa Weill followed by Meditation with Kathleen Fletcher

### THURSDAY

- 12-4pm Reiki  
Facilitated by: Nickie Rothwell (by appt. only)
- 6:00pm Bereavement Group  
Facilitated by Sharon Earle, LMFT

### FRIDAY

- 10:00am Gentle Yoga  
Facilitated by Lisa Weill
- 12-4pm Reiki  
Facilitated by Nicki Rothwell (by appt. only)

An intake is necessary before participating in our programming.

weSPARK Cancer Support Center  
26370 Diamond Place Suite 507  
Santa Clarita, CA 91350  
(661) 288-2322

## weSPARK Remembers Kenny Rankin

Over the years, Kenny Rankin was very supportive of weSPARK and its mission. He was always willing to perform at our Golf Tournament's "Unplugged" and at "weSPARKLE." He wrote, dedicated and performed a song for Wendie Jo Sperber, weSPARK's founder, at the Golf Tournament. What the people of weSPARK loved about Kenny was the fact that he was always willing to help. He would show up with a smile on his face asking how we were doing. Kenny was truly committed to us and we will miss him dearly. ▲

## A Tribute to a Great Talent and True Friend of weSPARK: Kenny Rankin

by Jimmy Stewart, Musician

Kenny Rankin, a man with a voice and a guitar, was very unique. In my career, I've only heard just a few artists who could even get close to his ability at using the guitar as an accompanying instrument.

A guitar creates its own mood, and in Kenny's hands, the guitar playing matched his voice so perfectly. The mood that Kenny

KENNY, continued on page 7

## Ronnie Lippin Cancer Information and Resource Line at Tower Cancer Research Foundation

A Free Service for Cancer Patients | 877 RLC 2120 | www.LACancerInfo.org

Ronnie Lippin Cancer Information and Resource Line is a FREE community service at Tower Cancer Research Foundation to help cancer patients, their families and friends living in Los Angeles County, cope with the challenges and complexities of a cancer diagnosis. We differ from other cancer information services by providing direct personal contact with a professional medical social worker who is available by telephone at 877-RLC-2120, or online at www.LAcancerinfo.org.

A few examples of the issues we are available to help cancer patients with are:

- Providing a family with options when the caregiver is too overwhelmed and no longer able to care for the patient, at time of a hospital discharge.
- Finding free or low cost transportation to medical appointments for a cancer patient.
- Assisting with finding financial support during temporary leave of absence for surgery, chemotherapy or radiation

treatment, when there is no other source of income, and the employer is not a participant with State Disability Insurance.

- Providing available options to a cancer patient whose disease is no longer improving with treatment, some of which are described in the "California Right to Know End of Life Act of 2008\*."

The skills and knowledge of a social worker with experience in an acute health care facility can assist with these and many other issues by providing referrals to the most current cancer related information and resources. As well, cancer patients can receive help navigating the health care system in order to make educated decisions about the information and resources available. Ronnie Lippin Information and Resource Line is operated Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 12:30-4:30 p.m. and Wednesday from 4:30-8:30 p.m. ▲

\* NASW newsletter, January 2009 issue




## Kids Corner

The "wee"SPARK programs provide the following:  
**"wee" SPARKS Ages 4-8 • "Twens" Ages 9-12**  
 Using circle time, games and arts & crafts, these programs allow our younger guests to interact with others experiencing similar challenges.  
 Call to enroll your child in the appropriate group.  
 Sherman Oaks call (818) 906-3022 • Santa Clarita call (661) 288-2322