

In This Together... Learn. Share. Laugh.

Media Guide to Gilda's Club Grand Rapids

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Gilda's Club Grand Rapids Mission Statement

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids is a free cancer support community of children, adults, families and friends.

The Founders and History of Gilda's Club Grand Rapids

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids was born in the early spring of 1996 from the efforts of Twink Frey, an active West Michigan community volunteer and a breast cancer survivor. Ms. Frey learned of the first Gilda's Club that opened in New York City from a national news feature segment. Frey soon recruited fellow cancer survivors Deb Bailey and Susan J. Smith to research the idea of bringing Gilda's Club to Grand Rapids.

Having met with and received the enthusiastic support of the local medical community, the three women began seeking community support. It soon became clear that a Gilda's Club in the Grand Rapids area would provide a much-needed link in the chain of care for those impacted by cancer—one which offered social and emotional support to patients as well as families who were learning to live with cancer.

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids was incorporated in July 1997. That same month, a newly-appointed Board of Directors began the work of setting up the organization. The Grand Rapids Clubhouse property was purchased in May 1998.

In August of the same year, the Board chose Leann D. Arkema to lead the organization. Ms. Arkema's first tasks were to raise the funds needed to renovate the 110-year-old house and barn on the Clubhouse property, and to set the groundwork for the Gilda's Club social and emotional support program.

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids was officially opened with a community celebration on February 15, 2001. In the past nine years, the Grand Rapids chapter has become the largest and busiest of the 30 North American Gilda's Club affiliates. Gilda's Club Grand Rapids expanded in 2009 with a program in Lowell, Michigan. The Lowell Clubhouse opened in September of 2009, thanks to a partnership with the Pink Arrow Project II, Lowell Community Wellness and the Lowell Senior Neighbors.

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids Director Biographies

Leann Arkema, *President/CEO*

Ms. Arkema was hired to lead Gilda's Club Grand Rapids in August 1998. She has previously served as the Executive Director of St. Cecilia Music Society, and as Community Services Director and Campaign Director for Congressman Vernon Ehlers. Leann holds a Master of Arts Degree with an emphasis in Non-profit Administration from Michigan State University and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from Calvin College.

Ms. Arkema was born in Australia and grew up in Patterson, New Jersey. She now resides in southeast Grand Rapids and serves as Treasurer for Senator Bill Hardiman. She is a graduate of Leadership Grand Rapids and has served on the boards of the Pine Rest Foundation, The Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids, the Wealthy Street Theatre, Embellish and St. Cecilia Music Society.

When she isn't busy with work and community activities, Leann enjoys traveling, attending arts-related events, exercising, reading, and working on house projects. One of Ms. Arkema's favorite trips was her extended stay in Australia. It was a life-long dream of hers to see the country of her birth that she left when she was 4 years old.

Beth Nelson, *Program Director*

Beth brings 20 years of experience from working with foster children, special needs children, hospice patients and their families. At Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, she supervises the team of social workers who facilitate the support groups, lectures, workshops and social activities.

Louise "Punky" Edison, *Development Director*

Louise has worked and volunteered in the greater Grand Rapids non-profit community for more than 30 years. She has brought her experience to the Gilda's Club team and has successfully provided a revenue stream of sustainable support for Gilda's Club Grand Rapids. She has been able to accomplish this through her work in development and non-profit management that includes broad-based corporate, foundation, volunteer and individual connections.

Wendy Wigger, *Community Relations and Program Development Director*

Wendy has more than 25 years of extensive healthcare, wellness program, marketing and communications experience from past positions at Priority Health and Holland Hospital. She has spoken across the nation on various health topics and has been featured in a number of business and professional magazines. Wendy is a member of Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) and the Grand Rapids Rotary, and currently hosts "Lakeshore Living," a local television show that airs in West Michigan.

Groups at a Glance

- **Support Groups** – These are weekly group meetings for men and women with cancer and are facilitated by a licensed or registered professional. Wellness Support Groups are for members living with cancer and Family Support Groups are for family members and friends of someone living with cancer. Such support groups provide time and space for members to discuss and share their experiences with others also affected by cancer.
- **Support Series** – These are monthly group meetings for people sharing a common diagnosis or interest.
- **Workshops** – Workshops are experiential, hands-on activities, facilitated by a volunteer with expertise in a particular field. Examples of workshops currently available at Gilda's Club are yoga, T'ai Chi, book club, art classes, quilting and cooking classes. Workshops are open to members and volunteers.
- **Lectures** – Community experts will provide lectures on topics of interest to members. Doctors, oncologists, nurses, social workers, nutritionists, inspirational speakers, comedians, as well as speakers on alternative treatments, "Spirituality and Cancer", "Organizing your Finances" and "Coping with Pain," for example. Lectures are all scheduled in the evening hours and may be accompanied by a light supper.
- **Social Gatherings** – In the spirit of Gilda Radner, Gilda's Club Grand Rapids values FUN as a part of our programming. Various social events will be held monthly – please watch the calendar for potlucks, movie nights, bingo, karaoke nights, etc.
- **Noogieland** – Noogieland, named after the noogies that Bill Murray gave to Gilda Radner on Saturday Night Live, is the wonderful play area for children impacted by cancer, either through their own diagnosis or that of a family member. Noogieland is decorated in a fantasyland theme, and includes a castle for playtime. All youth ages 13-19 impacted by cancer are welcomed at Gilda's Club to share time and talents, and to just be together.
- **Team Convene** – Any member at Gilda's Club Grand Rapids can request to have a Team Convene meeting. This is an opportunity for a member to gather their support network for a meeting at Gilda's Club, along with a staff licensed/registered professional. Together the member and their support team (family members, neighbors, teachers, medical team, etc.) can make plans together for managing the details of life during times of illness or treatment.
- **Family Focus** – The Family Focus is a meeting that can be requested by a member and facilitated by a staff licensed/registered professional. This is an opportunity for a family to meet and talk together about the impact of cancer on their family.

Support Groups at a Glance

Adults Impacted by Cancer

African Americans Living with Cancer

Blood/Breast/Colon/Lung Series (rotating)

Brain Cancer

Cancer Support – Any Diagnosis, Daytime

Cancer Support – Any Diagnosis, Evening

Family and Friends Support – Evening

Gynecological Cancer

Grief - Adult Support Group

Grief- Adult Support Group

Grief - Family and Friends Group

Grief - Parent Support Group

Grief - Spouse (Children at Home) Group

Living with Cancer Series

Men Who Love Women with Cancer

Prostate Cancer

Prostate Cancer, Under 59

Sister-to-Sister Group for Women of Color

Sister-to-Sister Support Group and Lunch

Thyroid Cancer

Visit our website at www.gildasclubgr.org or pick up a copy of our monthly calendar to find out more about program dates and times.

Youth Programming at a Glance

Noogie Nights

Kids, come for a time of activity and play in Noogieland! For kids in fourth grade and under.

Noogieland Plus

Structured childcare provided in Noogieland for children ages 3-5. *Arts and crafts, games, and more!*

Grief – Kids Grieve, Too Group

Grades 1-4, for kids who have experienced a death of someone in their life. A time for kids to learn more about the grief journey and their feelings about it through interactive activities.

Grief - Noogieland Plus

Discussion and structured playtime for children in kindergarten or younger on a grief journey.

Grief - Teen Group

A committed group for teens in 9th-12th grade on a grief journey, incorporates curriculum-based activities and discussion.

Grief - Tween Group

A committed group for tweens in 5th-8th grade on a grief journey. Incorporates curriculum based activities, discussion and playtime.

Kids Talk

Grades 1-4, for kids with cancer or in a family with cancer. A time for kids to learn more about the cancer journey and their feelings about it in a fun and interactive setting.

Tween Talk

Grades 5-8, for kids with cancer or in a family with cancer. A time for middle school age children to learn more about the cancer journey and their feelings about it in a fun and interactive setting.

Teen Talk

Grades 9-12, for teens with cancer or in a family with cancer. Targeted discussion topics, fun activities and time to socialize.

Teen Grief

Grades 9-12, for teens who have experienced a death of someone in their life. Targeted discussion topics, fun activities and time to socialize.

Workshops at a Glance

Art Open Instruction

Breast Cancer 101- This is an informational workshop for those newly diagnosed with breast cancer and is instructed by an oncology nurse and others from the professional cancer community. Co-sponsored by the Spectrum Health Cancer Program.

Gardening Together- Join in the fun and adventure of gardening! Working in the garden has many benefits and rewards. Meet new friends with a similar passion for plants and help support the beautiful gardens on our 6.5 acres.

Open Exercise- Come for a time of exercise. There is no instructor for this class and the game room is available for independent exercise and use of equipment.

Quilting- For new and experienced quilters!

Sit and Be Fit- This is a good beginning class to learn yoga basics.

Supper Together-A light meal will be served. We invite all members to join with others for a relaxing time of fellowship and renewal before the evening activities.

T'ai Chi- Improve circulation, balance, flexibility and inner peace through exploration of this ancient oriental exercise class. Your mind and body will thank you. T'ai Chi is an exercise that exerts no strenuous action. The feet are rooted to the ground with the torso and arms making graceful, deliberate and sequenced movements that take on the form of physical poetry.

Talking with your Mouth Full- Drop in and join us for lunch and conversation!

Thriving with Music and Movement- This program, also known as the Lebed Method, was designed originally for the breast cancer survivor to increase range of motion and to decrease lymphedema. It has also proven beneficial for other cancer survivors as well.

Yoga- A gentle yoga class, beginners are welcome.

Lectures at a Glance

"Ask the Doctor" - Local physicians are brought in for lectures on various topics. Check the monthly program calendar for specific topics and dates.

"Ask the Lawyer" - A lawyer will be here to answer your legal questions. Feel free to bring any paper work or documents you would like them to look at.

Breast Cancer Drop-In Time - Newly diagnosed with breast cancer? Come talk with others who have been there.

Prostate Cancer Drop-In Time - Newly diagnosed with prostate cancer? Come talk with others who have been there.

"Look Good, Feel Better"- This program, presented by the American Cancer Society, is to help women in treatment for cancer with appearance-related side-effects. Each woman learns to perform her own makeover using complimentary cosmetics and skin care products.

Social Events at a Glance

Dorothy's Chocolate Factory - Join Dorothy and the gang for a time of baking and fun!

Dice and Dominoes- (After every Talking with your Mouth Full lunch) Enjoy some dice and domino games with friends.

Gilda's Book Ends - Join this group of folks who enjoy reading and discuss a new book each month.

New Member Brunch- Have you joined Gilda's Club recently? Come meet other new members and enjoy a delicious Saturday morning brunch! We welcome current members and volunteers to join brunch and meet our newest members.

Visit our website at www.gildasclubgr.org or pick up a copy of our monthly calendar to find out more about program dates and times.

Accessing Gilda's Club Groups, Activities & Events

To Join:

- 1) Drop by the Grand Rapids or the Lowell Clubhouse during the times listed below
- 2) Call us for information (616) 453-8300 or (800) 326-1419
- 3) E-mail us at info@gildasclubgr.org or visit our website at www.gildasclubgr.org

RSVP: Please RSVP when requested on the monthly program calendar.

Parking: Ample parking is available at both clubhouses.

Handicap Accessibility: Both clubhouses are handicap accessible.

Sign-in: Please sign in at the reception desk upon arrival.

Hours of Operation & Locations

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Clubhouse

1806 Bridge Street NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504
Tel: (616) 453-8300 or (800) 326-1419
Fax: (616) 453-8355
E-mail: info@gildasclubgr.org

Grand Rapids Clubhouse Hours

Monday	9 am - 9 pm
Tuesday	9 am - 9 pm
Wednesday	9 am - 9 pm
Thursday	9 am - 9 pm
Friday	9 am - 1 pm
1st & 3rd Saturdays	9 am - 1 pm
2nd & 4th Saturdays	Clubhouse Closed
Sundays	Clubhouse Closed

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids: Lowell Clubhouse

314 South Hudson Street
Lowell, MI 49331
Tel: (616) 897-8600 or (800) 326-1419
E-mail: info@gildasclubgr.org
Open Tuesdays, 12:30-8:30 pm

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids: Allegan Program

For people living in Allegan, we do offer an evening activity on Mondays, 5-8 pm at 524 Marshall Ave, Allegan, MI 49010. Call 800-326-1149, www.gildasclubgr.org/alleganextension

Did you know that...

- ✓ Gilda's Club Grand Rapids is a *free* cancer support community of children, adults, families and friends
- ✓ No one stays overnight at Gilda's Club, rather they come for social and emotional support
- ✓ Members attend lectures, workshops, social activities, support groups, networking session, art classes and the like, all with the purpose of *learning to LIVE with cancer or grief*
- ✓ Gilda's Club Grand Rapids is chartered to serve six area counties: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa
- ✓ The organization exists *solely* on individual, corporate and foundation contributions, 100% of which stay in the local community
- ✓ Gilda's Club is part of an affiliate network throughout North America and was the 12th Club to open its doors
- ✓ The Club is named for the late "Saturday Night Live" comedian Gilda Radner. The first Gilda's Club was founded in New York City in 1995 by her husband, Gene Wilder, and her cancer therapist, Joanna Bull
- ✓ The Grand Rapids Clubhouse averages more than 600 visits per week and nearly 20,000 visits per year. Gilda's Club Grand Rapids has more than 5,000 members and over 2,000 members are currently active in the program
- ✓ More than 1,200 area volunteers donate their time to Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, hosting workshops such as woodworking, yoga, art and more. Volunteers also help with general Clubhouse care and office work
- ✓ Many of those volunteers are cancer survivors and people currently living with cancer who want to share their gifts and learning with others