

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



ABOVE+BEYOND
CANCER



FOUNDER'S LETTER



Adversity leads to personal growth.

You don't learn much about yourself when everything is going perfectly well. It's when things are difficult that we find the strength that already exists deep within ourselves. This lesson applies to organizations as well as individuals. The COVID pandemic has been a source of adversity but also a source of ingenuity, innovation, and organizational growth for Above + Beyond Cancer. I am so proud of the way that the Above + Beyond Cancer team has responded to the challenges of the last 2 years.

Using a combination of in-person and virtual formats, Above + Beyond Cancer has been able to expand services to cancer survivors and family members during the pandemic. We now provide more than a dozen evidence based programs to enhance health and well-being through physical activity, nutrition, education, and emersion with nature. In collaboration with MercyOne Cancer Center and with support from the Iowa Cancer Consortium, we transitioned our weekly Cancer Education Series into a Video Podcast. Survivors and caregivers can join us in person at the MeryOne Health & Fitness Center, or live stream the session in real-time every Wednesday evening from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. for the educational offering or they can view it at their convenience on the MercyOne website or Above + Beyond Cancer YouTube channel. Through all of these avenues these programs connected with people more than 4,000 times in 2021!

In response to the increased needs of patients undergoing cancer treatment, Above + Beyond Cancer, with the generous support of grants from the Iowa Cancer Consortium, the Nelson Family Foundation in Des Moines, and the American Cancer Society developed a program to provide lodging for patients undergoing cancer treatment in locations away from their homes. I am so proud of our staff and our partners. We recognized a barrier to care, we evaluated possible solutions, and we quickly implemented a program to provide this vital service. None of us is as good as all of us.

In late summer 20 cancer survivors and caregivers journeyed with Above + Beyond Cancer to Utah. We performed a service project at the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge in Salt Lake City. We then spent 5 days camping and hiking in Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks. We immersed ourselves in the beauty of nature and in the challenge of hiking difficult terrain. John Muir wrote, "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike."

I hope that you enjoy this Annual Report. You will learn more about our programs and how we have impacted the community in 2021. You will also learn how we intend to continue to elevate the lives of those touched by cancer in 2022. Thank you for all you have done to support us throughout the years.

With great appreciation,

RICHARD L. DEMING, MD

Founder

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER



Putting the Shoe on the Other Foot

One of the most attractive things about Above + Beyond Cancer is that we welcome anyone who has ever been diagnosed with any kind of cancer AND all caregivers. As a cancer survivor, I have always been intrigued and impressed by these caregivers. Their steadfast ability to stand with their loved one through their cancer journey is deeply moving to me. While I have been a cancer survivor for more than 10 years now, I have not experienced the caregiver aspect much in my life, until recently and frankly I find it to be challenging.

When you are diagnosed with cancer you jump on the “cancer conveyor belt” and do whatever the doctors and nurses tell you is the next step. “Your chemo treatment is Tuesday, please check into the infusion center at 9 a.m.” So, you put it on your calendar and you show-up, waiting for one of the experts on your care team to let you know where and when to show up next.

As the friend, or family member of the survivor I found myself at arm's length from the treatment related tasks, thinking, what can I do to help this person I care about? Well, I decided that I would follow the advice that I have given people who asked me how they could be a good caregiver to their loved one on the cancer journey. (I hate when I have to take my own advice!) So, here are the actions steps I have taken on my better days:

- Don't ignore the person, their diagnosis or its severity
- There is no need to make grand gestures – a kind text, call, or better yet a short personal visit is perfect!
- Check on the person with consistency and kindness – a quick “how's it going today” text is not a bad idea.
- Create a diversion for the survivor. Ask them to go to coffee, go for a walk, watch a movie, or play a game.
- Be direct with questions like – “how did your chemo go today?” “Did the radiation make you tired?”
- Never tilt your head and ask, “how are you?” Man, that used to make me boil when I was sick. I wanted to say, “I'm bald, tired and pissed off – that is how I am!”
- Tell them how you want to help – “I want to bring you dinner, what sounds good and when would you like it?” Saying, “please let me know how I can help,” will make you feel better, but will only in rare occasions result in any help for the survivor in need.
- Most importantly (and this is the hardest task for me) show up for your loved one, shut up and listen.

I love what this organization does, especially because it helps cancer survivors of any kind AND all of the caregivers! Let's keep up this good work!

CHRISTOPHER GOODALE

*Above + Beyond Cancer
Executive Director*

2021 PROGRAMS



Three Things You Want to Know

WE OFFER 14 ONGOING PROGRAMS

Our variety of weekly and monthly programs serve survivors and caregivers. Many are evidence based- which means- we administer pre and post assessments to track progress of the participants. This process allows us to meet each person where they are.

This past year we created more outdoor programs to provide a safer environment during these changing times. Hike and Yoga is one example and meets every Tuesday morning, all year round, rain, snow or shine. Another is Urban Pole Walking, which is an evidence based program, currently our fastest growing program, and is open to the whole community. Our Cycle Club hit a record number of participants last summer, as we explore the trails all around the metro area.

Brian, a survivor, who was a couple weeks post treatment joined the Hike and Yoga program. We discussed modifications and over time he increased not only in strength, but in friendships. Brian also helped us pilot the first group of Urban Pole Walkers. Just 4 months post treatment, Brian's final assessment showed improvements in every category tested; resting heart rate, balance, body fat, and muscle gain. His strength tests improved by 75% and walking gait 40%. One sunny afternoon, Brian says:

”

“I credit Above + Beyond Cancer, and my own moxie, to getting healthy again.”

2021 PROGRAMS

- A Mind, Body, Spirit Cancer Survivorship Program Open To All
- Bike Club
- Book Club
- Cancer Education Series
- Cooking & Nutrition Classes
- Healing Yoga
- Hike & Stretch
- Indoor Cycling
- Kin Stretch
- Mindful Cafe
- Qigong
- Recovery & Beyond
- Tai Chi for Fall Prevention
- Total Training Fitness
- Urban Pole Walking

2021 EVENTS

- Celebrate Luncheon
- Elevate Festival



OUR PROGRAMS SERVE THE DES MOINES METRO COMMUNITY + BEYOND

Over the last year we have expanded our Virtual and Hybrid offerings which include Cooking Classes, Book Club, the Cancer Education Series, Yoga, Meditation, Qigong, Tai Chi, and Total Training. These classes can be accessed through Zoom, YouTube or Facebook Live. We have people attending from towns across Iowa and beyond the Iowa border. These diverse programs are reaching survivors, caregivers, their families and friends. With the increase of a virtual presence coupled with our face to face programs, over the past 10 years our outreach is now in the thousands.

Becky, a survivor, participated in a small-group Total Training class we offered through Zoom twice a week. For eight weeks Becky attended every zoom class. Her post assessments were off the charts with progress in every category that was assessed.

”

“I was feeling isolated, extremely depressed, overweight, and not motivated. I reached out to Above + Beyond Cancer knowing that I needed something to get “me” back on track. Within 8 weeks I was feeling good about myself, moving, motivated, and learning to live and work within my “new normal.” The more I speak about it, the more I find myself healing. **Above + Beyond Cancer has given me my life back and I feel like I have purpose again.**”

-Becky

”

“This organization is more than changing a muscle and fat ratio. It’s how you exist in the world, with the rest of the world. It’s joyful. I feel like I have been given permission again to experience joy and share it.”

- Survivor

ZIPCODE IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN LONGEVITY

Our organization is aware of factors that affect global and community health inequities and continue to make our programs free, scholarshiped, and geographically diverse. We have offered home visits when preferred, and are coordinating with cancer centers to offer video tutorials of restorative and gentle practices like chair yoga and meditation so survivors may tap into support while at the clinic or at home. We will continue to build our own awareness and strive to remove obstacles to serving a diverse community and narrowing the gap of health equity.

YOU HAVE CANCER



I'm sitting in the waiting room, wearing a hand-made cloth mask with tiny multi-colored bicycles that drift in every direction, just as my mind is. *"Count your breath,"* I say to myself. *"You are going to be ok,"* I reassure myself. Occasionally, I make eye contact with another masked face. Their almond brown eyes seem kind and observant enough to notice my worry. "By looking at the stickers on your computer, I know you are going to handle everything just fine." I wonder which sticker gave him that assumption. Was it "Iowa Public Radio," "Black Lives Matter," or the "Open for Adventure" sticker with neon green trees. My stickers also drift in random directions.

I look at my phone timer, seven minutes left until I chug and grimace through the next round of barium. I attempt emails, I count my breath again, I wait for the nurse to say, "Mary Jane." I sit, almost stoned like. Delirious in disbelief. Time seems to move like a whizzing freight train and pouring molasses simultaneously.

Five hours earlier I was lounging on an exam bed, slightly high from modern medicine, recovering from a colonoscopy. The doctor said, "you have cancer." What? "Yes, I'm 99.9% sure what I saw was cancer." OK, those may not be the exact words, but they are what I recall his words to be. More questions, more words, lots of blur, and plain shock.

I read the paper work. Sigmoid Colon Cancer. How can this be? No family history, no risk factors, I'm a certified health nut, my job is nagging others to be healthy. I've read self help books so much I could be the founder of a self help book addicts club. This summer I celebrated my 50th birthday, as a tumor was silently squatting in my colon, taking on more crappy real estate.





Sadly, my first call to action is a call to my insurance provider to see if MercyOne is in network. I have cancer, and I want my dear friend, Dr. Richard Deming, to be handling this. My next conversation is with Dick. His voice is confident and calm. I am calm. For now.

"Mary Jane," the nurse says. Soon, I'm supine, head first towards the donut hole of the scan table. I close my eyes and count, hold my breath, count some more, and then drive home in a blur.

The following hours entertain thoughts drifting in every direction. I'm going to be OK. What if it has spread? How did this happen? Was it stress? Was it my penchant for cocktails? Are there toxins in my 85 year old house? What will I make for dinner? I'm angry, scared, confused, and anxious. And, I'm also calm, quiet, confident, and processing. I'm all of it. My thoughts are pedaling multi-colored bikes nowhere and everywhere.

Much like the Grinch's heart growing three sizes instantly, compassion for my fellow cancer survivors grow tenfold. I am coping with "scanxiety." I am coping with cancer questions, I am bracing myself for financial toxicity, the appointments, the feeling of having the rug pulled out from under you. The unknown. Into the dark of night, the phone rings, Dick shares good news. No spread. Surgery is my cure. I'm lucky. I'm grateful. I gingerly cry with relief.

It was a few months ago when I noticed the red flag, and requested a colonoscopy ASAP. It was time anyway. **This screen saved my life. The screen preserved the quality of my life. Schedule your screenings!**

For certain, my job prepared me for this, and yet nothing can prepare you completely to hear "you have cancer." I accept I will not know why. I'm at peace that much of life is out of our control. So, I continue to count my breath, focus on what's in my control, and stay open for adventure.

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CANCER EDUCATION SERIES



Back in 2009, our Founder, Dr. Richard Deming put an idea into motion by pairing his Wednesday night indoor cycling class with an educational component on the front end and ending the evening with healthy fruit smoothies. It was a wonderful way for cancer survivors and caregivers to build strength, expand their knowledge, and enjoy fellowship – three very important areas to consistently improving our health. The trio of activities takes place at MercyOne Health & Fitness in Clive and has a loyal group of dedicated groupies.

The smoothies are provided by longtime friend of Above + Beyond Cancer, Teresa Adams Tomka and her store, Kitchen Collage. Dr. Deming drives the indoor cycling class (with help from Tina Turner and other Rock stars). The Cancer Education Series however has a different guest each week. The speakers cover health-oriented topics that cover the broadest of topics. For many years the scheduling of these speakers was handled by Dr. Deming's dedicated Administrative Assistant Susie Anderson, who retired in 2021. Today the scheduling is done by Survivorship Coordinator, Amanda Fry and Administrative Coordinator Noelle Scalco.

During the first 10 years the Cancer Education Series was available to those who were able to physically attend the sessions each Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. In 2019, Above + Beyond Cancer began recording the sessions and creating podcasts of the information shared each week. This allowed people to gain all of the amazing information being presented, but they could listen on their own time, or at their location miles away from central Iowa.

When the pandemic hit in full force, the Cancer Education Series took a hiatus, like everything else. Switching to a virtual format became a must, so Zoom became the format. Since this was new to everyone, those initial recordings were a bit rough. However, this new format allowed for guests to be part of the Cancer Education Series from anywhere in the country which allowed for experts from coast-to-coast to be booked. These recordings became part of the Above + Beyond Cancer YouTube library and can all be seen at the convenience of the viewer.

When the MercyOne Health & Fitness Center rolled back some of the pandemic restrictions, the Cancer Education Series came back and was once again open to an in-person audience. However, we wanted to keep the videocast audience as that group was really growing in number. Enter George Clark, a former radio personality and engineer, who had the expertise to record the sessions. George had previously been the person behind the creation of the podcasts, so he simply added his extensive video knowledge to the weekly production. Most recently livestreaming on YouTube and Facebook Live has been added and the quality of the production is ever increasing.

While the important health information shared during each week's Cancer Education Series is the core value of this ongoing tradition. The fact that these sessions are now accessible to all at their convenience has allowed the number of people who can gain from this information to grow exponentially. For example, in 2021, the Cancer Education Series was viewed by 5,188 people either live or through the Above + Beyond Cancer YouTube or the MercyOne Cancer Center Website.

HOTEL PROGRAM



The Above + Beyond Cancer Hotel Program partners with hotels to provide complimentary or reduced-rate lodging to out-of-town cancer patients, and their caregivers, when they must travel away from home for treatment. This outreach has been a tremendous addition to Above + Beyond Cancer programs.



"I cannot even begin to express the depths of our gratitude for what you and your organization are doing for my mother."

- Caregiver



"I have had a wonderful experience here at the hotel! The staff have been very nice and accommodating. I am extremely appreciative for the assistance your organization has given me! This has helped me so much. I am having some fatigue, but I am coping pretty good. Having this very comfortable room to come to is wonderful!"

-Patient

Many patients are already paying very high medical bills, so supporting them with lodging is an impactful way to help them through a very challenging time. Above + Beyond Cancer and our partners offered more than 190 nights of lodging to cancer patients and their caregivers in 2021. The Hotel Program is made possible in part by the generosity of our partners at American Cancer Society, Iowa Cancer Consortium and The Nelson Foundation as well as the following hotel partners:

- Best Western Plus – Clive
- Hilton Des Moines Downtown
- Sheraton – West Des Moines
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- TownePlace Suites by Marriott- West Des Moines
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All gifts made to Above + Beyond Cancer are appreciated. We have made every effort to ensure that this list is accurate. We apologize for any misspellings or inaccurate information and would welcome hearing your feedback at chris@aboveandbeyondcancer.org.

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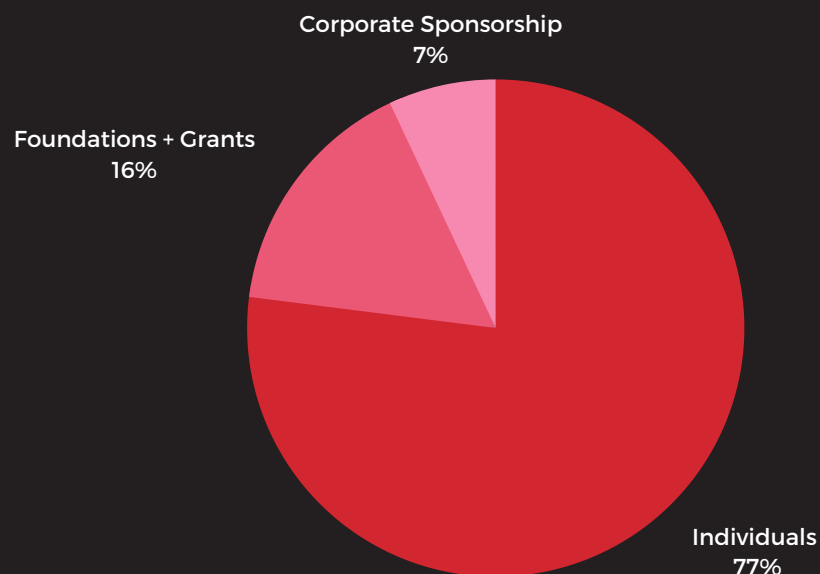
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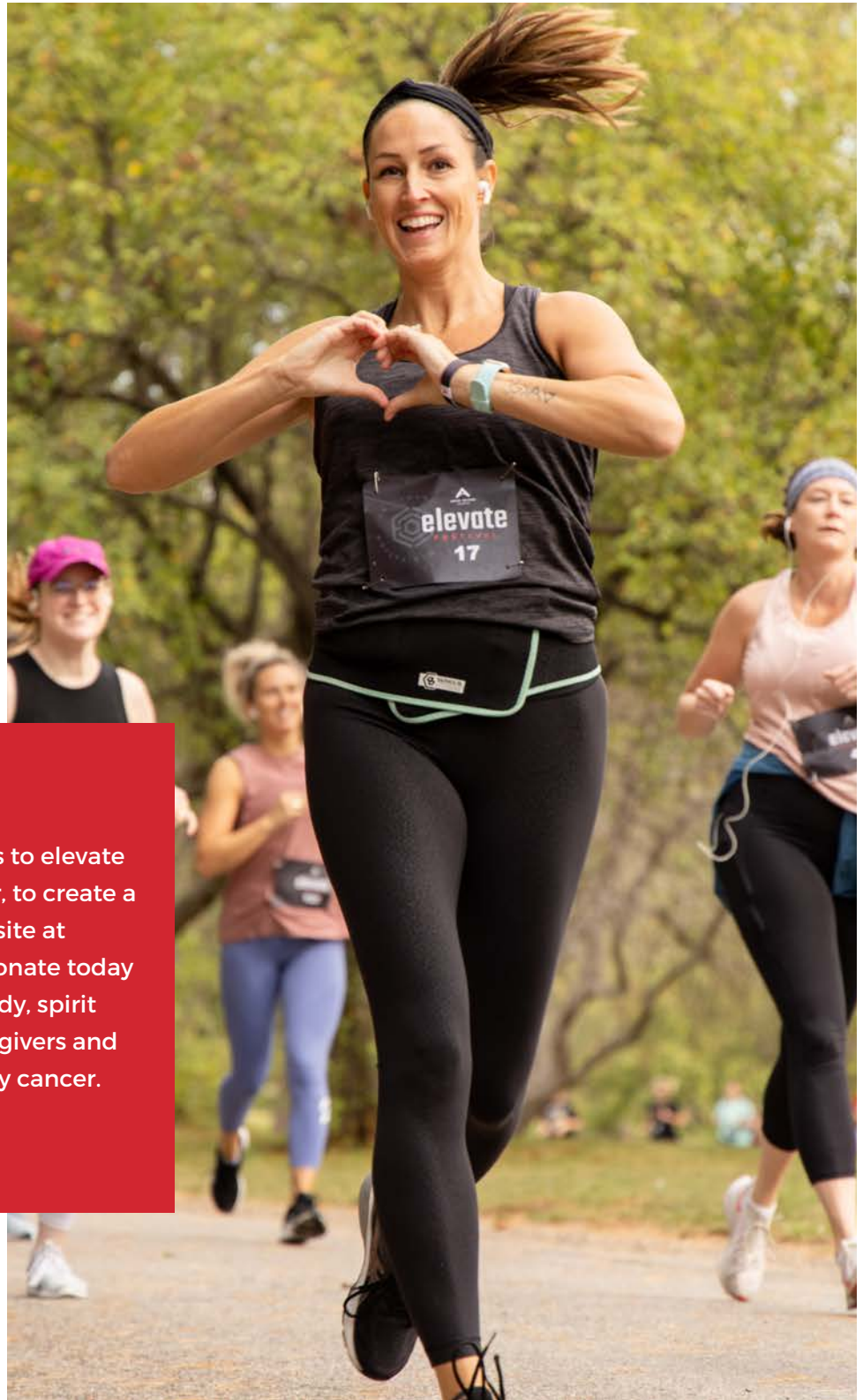
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Above + Beyond Cancer's mission is to elevate the lives of those touched by cancer, to create a healthier world! Visit our website at [aboveandbeyondcancer.org](https://www.aboveandbeyondcancer.org) and donate today to help provide weekly mind, body, spirit programs to cancer survivors, caregivers and anyone who has been touched by cancer.



One of the most humbling and heartwarming manners in which gifts come to Above + Beyond Cancer is when donors make a special point to mention their friends and loved ones upon making a gift to our organization. It is a meaningful way to remember those who are no longer on this earth and those whom we desire to honor.

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