



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH COMPASSION:

THE IMPACT OF THE SID JACOBSON JCC'S ANNUAL STRONGER THAN CANCER 5K WALK, RUN, AND FAMILY FUN DAY

BY ALLISON CAGGIA

Sid Jacobson JCC's Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center recently completed another successful annual 5K, a vital fundraiser that supports its mission of providing free services to individuals affected by cancer and their caregivers. For over 20 years, the wellness center has fostered a compassionate community, offering holistic support that addresses the physical and emotional challenges faced by those battling cancer. From case management to exercise classes, counseling, and creative arts programs, the center ensures all its services are accessible and free of charge.

Randy Hight, LCSW (Director, Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center) one of the key organizers of the 5K, highlighted the event's crucial role in supporting these free services. "Some people can't even afford the co-pays, let alone the cost of therapy," Randy explained. "The funds raised ensure we can continue offering these much-needed services to those who might not otherwise have access."

Initially a race for competitive runners, the event has evolved into a family-friendly walk, drawing participants of all ages. Many bring their children and dogs, turning the 5K into a celebration of community and support. "It's more than a race," Randy noted. "It's a chance for people to come together, raise awareness, and feel like they belong to a beautiful community."

This year's event honored Susan Lee Stein, (LMSW, JD, Social Worker, Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center) a licensed social worker at the Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center. Susan is an integral part of the center, leading a weekly walking group and support groups for women with breast and gynecologic cancers. She also chairs the center's advisory board, organizes monthly workshops, and offers short-term individual therapy. Her dedication is deeply personal—after a decade of practicing law, Susan transitioned to social work during the pandemic while simultaneously navigating her daughter's lymphoma diagnosis. "Everyone is touched by cancer in some way," Susan shared. "Most people feel very isolated during their illness. Our goal is to provide a community where they do not have to face it alone."

The 5K is a cornerstone event for the Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center, providing a space where families and individuals come together to support each other and raise vital funds for a cause that touches countless lives. As part of the Sid Jacobson JCC, the only full-service JCC on Long Island's North Shore, this event reflects the JCC's commitment to enriching the lives of all individuals and families through recreational, cultural, and social services programs based on Jewish values and traditions.

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