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## **YMCA Cancer Rehabilitation Exercise (CaRE) program expands with CaRE 2 Continue**

*Cancer Survivors build strong community bonds while building stronger bodies*

In 2011, the Lancaster Family YMCA launched the first Cancer Rehabilitation Exercise (CaRE) class in collaboration with Penn Medicine/Lancaster General Health. The 12-week class was designed to help cancer patients use exercise therapy to overcome the residual effects of cancer treatments such as fatigue, loss of appetite and strength.

The first class was held at the YMCA's Lampeter-Strasburg branch and consisted of 12 participants recovering from breast and other types of cancer. Participants for the program were selected by oncologists at LG Health and then evaluated by LG Health physical therapists to ensure they were physically able to participate in the program.

The CaRE program has expanded significantly since that first class, and is now offered 3 times per year at the YMCA's Lancaster City, New Holland and Lampeter-Strasburg branches.

A report by researchers at the University of Rochester Medical Center that was recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association's [JAMA Oncology](#), found that of all the studies they could find on the various ways to help cancer patients get their energy back, exercise was the clear winner.

The many cancer survivors who have gone through the YMCA's CaRE classes would agree with that analysis, sharing that the program helped to increase their energy, and in some cases, they felt stronger and able to do more physical activities than before cancer.

While CaRE is helping to build stronger bodies, the program also fosters strong social and emotional ties among the participants. For many, these bonds have been just as beneficial to their recovery as the exercise routines. To help CaRE participants maintain these important connections and stay on track with their wellness routines after completing the program, the Lancaster Family YMCA recently rolled out the next phase of CaRE called CaRE 2 Continue. Through CaRE 2 Continue, past CaRE participants can join together one day each week and be part of one of the current CaRE classes. The past participants provide support and motivation for those newly

facing cancer recovery and being part of this group helps CaRE alumni maintain forward progress.

The power of these relationships forged through adversity is evident in the CaRE 2 Continue class at the City Center YMCA, and the group had decided to channel that energy into making mastectomy pillows to donate to cancer patients at the Ann B. Barshinger Cancer Institute.

A CaRE 2 Continue participant who is coordinating the pillow making efforts said, "These classes have changed the focus of my life, not just by making exercise accessible with measurable results, but also introducing me to a remarkable support group who is willing to listen and lift each other towards a healthy and positive life. The only thing we have in common is cancer and our remarkable instructor, but our group bond is so strong that we look for ways to stay connected and we're trying to ease the path for those that follow us by giving back to the Barshinger Institute."

Recovery from mastectomy surgery involves drain tubes, soreness and pain, as many in this CaRE 2 Continue class know firsthand. These must-have chest pillows are first needed on the way home from the hospital to protect sensitive areas from the seatbelt. The heart-shaped pillows are designed to securely fit under the arm to provide pressure/pain relief after mastectomy, lumpectomy or breast cancer treatment, making the recovery process a bit more bearable.

On April 5, after flexing their muscles in the Care 2 Continue class, the participants will flex their fingers as the set up a pillow making workshop at the City Center YMCA as their way to spread "care" to others.

**CaRE 2 Continue Class**  
**April 5, 11:15 am – 12:00 pm**  
**City Center YMCA, 265 Harrisburg Ave.**  
**Lancaster, PA 17603**

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#### *About CaRE*

CaRE is a fully-subsidized, 12-week program offered at the Lancaster Family YMCA branches in partnership with Penn Medicine/Lancaster General Health. If you or someone you know would like to participate in CaRE, please contact the Lancaster General Contact Center at 544-4636. Learn more about CaRE at [www.lancasterymca.org/care](http://www.lancasterymca.org/care).

#### *About CaRE 2 Continue*

CaRE 2 Continue is a program created by the Lancaster Family YMCA to help past CaRE participants stay on track with their wellness routines and maintain the strong support relationships they formed in the CaRE class. Through the CaRE 2 Continue program, past CaRE participants can join in the weekly group exercise portion of the current CaRE classes.