Gilda’s Club Madison provides cancer education, emotional support and hope to men, women and children affected by any type of cancer—all at no cost to them.

“...a real impact on survivorship. The commitment of staff and volunteers to survivors and their families is palpable!”
To ensure that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action and sustained by community.
The Red Door Society was established to sustainably meet the need for expanded programs by providing a vehicle for advocates of Gilda’s Club to make an ongoing financial commitment. Sustainable income is needed to ensure that Gilda’s Club Madison continues to be able to offer all programs at no cost to individuals and families touched by cancer.

Five levels of support are suggested, but anyone pledging over $250 per year for a minimum of three years will be a member. Please contact Lindsey Dalton at lindsey@gildasclubmadison.org to learn more.

“Thanks for everything you do. We have something that is so special in Madison, and I especially appreciate the programming that you have done for young survivors. This is especially important to me and many other people. Keep up the great work!”

72% of members agreed or strongly agreed that Gilda’s increased their sense of control.

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up the great work!”

72% of members
agreed or strongly
agreed that Gilda’s
increased their
sense of control
Once cancer is in your life, you are a changed person. For the past 15-months, our family has worn and lived by the bracelets we wear daily. Just Breathe... have courage... live in the present tense. Our bracelets bear no names as we know many are impacted by cancer and can, too, live the words. We wear our bracelets in honor of Dave.

Dave died 3 months ago while Trinity, Camryn, and I were at Gilda’s Club. We were called minutes before arriving at Gilda’s and told to come home. The girls and I talked and they wanted to say a final goodbye over the phone and attend our groups. We said our goodbyes while sitting in the parking lot at Gilda’s. Fifteen minutes later, we received a call that Dave had passed. We all have our own beliefs about the timing of death and mine is that he was waiting for us to be at Gilda’s. Think about the power of the groups at Gilda’s if two young girls picked attending group over heading back home. They chose to just breathe in that moment and to live in the present tense.

We choose courage every day. I have worked in schools for fifteen years. I was a middle school teacher for 10 years, a high school associate principal for 4 years and now am back at the school where I taught, as an associate principal. I share these roles specifically as I’ve been around enough teens and trauma to know that trauma impacts students significantly. My daughters have experienced trauma from the onset of their dad’s stage 4 pancreatic cancer through his passing on January 16. My girls have missed only one day of school, continue to be active in sports and clubs, interact with family and friends and to live. Without Gilda’s Club, I truly do not think we would be able to be managing our grief and living like we have the past three months.

We added Wednesday night Grief Busters every other week to our schedules. My girls are much older than other kids in the group and they have chosen to take a leadership role to support the younger kids who are facing loss due to cancer. This is just another layer of support available to us through Gilda’s Club.

Thank you, on behalf of my family and all the families who have had the benefit of walking through the doors of Gilda’s Club. Thank you for contributing to a place that provides support--both short and long term during a time that is scary, confusing and lonely. Thank you for impacting my life and my daughters’ lives by creating opportunities. Gilda’s Club is the reason we can balance our grief with our living.

We are choosing to use our experience to change the lives of others, to just breathe...to have courage...to live in the present tense.

This bracelet reminds me of our courage. Gilda’s has helped us live the message.

“Gilda’s Club is the reason we can balance our grief with our living.”
Grief Busters: Giving Children a Sense of Belonging

Grief Busters, a group for children who have lost a parent to cancer, started a new session in February 2018. "They really get a safe space to be with other kids their age who have experienced a loss to cancer," explains Carissa Hodgson, Youth Program Manager.

Many children feel safe and connected coming to weekly Kids Support during Family Nights at Gilda’s Club. Kid Support is an evidence-based program designed for children living with or who have a loved one experiencing cancer. Gilda’s staff found that many children wanted to continue to have a safe, welcoming place to address their feelings after their parent has passed. Grief Busters addresses the unique needs of children who have lost a loved one to cancer.

The six-session curriculum takes place twice a month and can be molded to the individuals in each specific group. Each session is facilitated by an experienced mental health professional. “What I like about Gilda’s is that there are no hard and fast rules—we can really tailor our programming,” explains Hodgson.

Activities each week range from creating worry stones to visiting with therapy dogs to sharing artifacts representing their loved one. “Our goal is to give them a sense of belonging, a sense of normalcy and community,” explains Hodgson. Grief Busters also provides children with coping skills and teaches them how to grieve. In addition, it increases family communication.

At the end of the last group, all of the children said that the group always or sometimes taught them how to deal with hard times, and 100% of the children said they would recommend this group to friends and family. After the last session, one parent shared, “Being in the group with others that have experienced a loss of a parent has helped my son know he’s not the only one… He was WAY more open talking to me about his feelings.”
Three Sheep and One Dog: 
Gilda’s Club Volunteer of the Year Spins a Ten-Year Tale of Hope

Each year, Gilda’s Club honors a volunteer with the Amy Nickles Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award, providing time, energy, and expertise past what is expected. Meet this year’s recipient, Faye Antolec, a Goodie Gang Captain, therapy dog lover, talented art teacher and, well, yes, sheep farmer.

Faye got started with Gilda’s Club ten years ago, after both her father and her sister passed away with pancreatic cancer. “I wanted to do something in their memory,” she says. “Gilda’s mission statement was exactly the opportunity I was looking for: to ensure that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action, and sustained by community.”

Faye has cooked meals for seventy five people on Family Night each Tuesday, served as Gilda’s Club librarian, baked treats for fundraising efforts, and greeted guests. But perhaps what kids love most about Faye is her black lab named Gandhi, a registered therapy dog and pet partner through Dogs On Call, Inc. Gandhi is known for his grief-busting skills and kids can’t wait to experience his joy and love.

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Faye spent the majority of her career in human resources at Pleasant Company, best known for the iconic American Girl doll. Today, she follows her passion in fiber art and has started teaching classes for members. “I have three sheep that give me plenty of wool fiber each year,” says Faye. “I sell my fiber art on my website, at art shows, and some local shops. Currently I’m working on my Master Spinner Certification.”

With such a full life, how does Faye find the time to volunteer?

“I find it so amazing that all the programs are free of charge and I get to see first-hand how they benefit people in need of support. This is a positive and rewarding experience that I can be a part of.”

Her advice for others who are thinking about volunteering at Gilda’s Club?

“There are so many great opportunities here for people of all ages,” says Faye. “Whatever your interests are, there’s a fit. The commitment can be weekly, monthly, or maybe just helping out at special events. Gilda’s depends on their volunteers to get them through each and every day. You will be appreciated and recognized for your time and efforts. You will always want to come back.”

“Cooking for 75 people is no easy task! Especially when it includes the diverse palates and needs of people in treatment. Faye has always worked to keep everyone happy, starting with the members, and also her Goodie Gang team, as well as staff. She had to juggle a lot of balls but wowed us with her act!”

“Volunteer of the Year”

“Three Sheep and One Dog: Gilda’s Club Volunteer of the Year Spins a Ten-Year Tale of Hope”
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2017 Club Red
Ben Halfen, Chair
Ashley Matthys, Co-Vice Chair
Andrew Weininguer, Co-Vice Chair
Sara Burt
Bridget Gregson
Justin Jackson
DeeAnn Jensen
Amber Krogman
Samantha Michalski
Mario Morris
Scott Murray
Jess Noelck
Danielle Oleston
Jamie Pratt
 Angie Rieves
Rachel Schildman

2017 Annual Report design and writing: Marla Norton and Anna Schryver
INCOME

IN-KIND GIFTS
At Gilda’s Club Madison, we strive to be diligent stewards of your financial gifts, while still ensuring the highest quality in programming. In 2017, in addition to thousands of volunteer hours and many thousands of dollars spent directly on our programs, we also received the generous gift of professional services. These services include everything from oncologists who share their expertise with our members to tech support and accounting services. The breakdown to the right shows the approximate value of these in-kind services.

This represents a total savings for Gilda’s Club Madison of: $255,369
83% of members agreed that Gilda’s Club reduced feelings of isolation & loneliness.