

## Integrative Health Care

### Service, Partnership, Professionalism – LifeSpark Cancer Resources

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**LifeSpark Cancer Resources**, a service program in Denver, Colorado for individuals with cancer, is leading the way as a volunteer based organization. Unique among service organizations of its type, LifeSpark has forged a niche in the Denver-Boulder area by providing both Healing Touch and Reiki to individuals with cancer, by working with low-income individuals and by partnering with hospitals and churches. Sessions are provided weekly, and program duration is for a period of three months to a year.

**Begun shortly after 9/11/2001** as a way to relieve suffering and “act locally”, we based this program upon the successful Bosom Buddies program in Hawaii. Initial planning committee members included Janet Mentgen, Anne Day, the two of us (Lisa Anselme and Sandy Priester) and several other Healing Touch and Reiki leaders. Named Healing Buddies, the program was initially housed within QuaLife, a Denver non-profit wellness center initiated by Dr. Paul Hamilton, a Denver oncologist. QuaLife eventually closed after twenty years of service to the community. In order to

continue the important work of the energy program, a new non-profit organization was created in 2005. We named it LifeSpark, to signify the spark of life in each person that we hoped to strengthen through the program.

#### **Partnership, Service and Expansion:**

From the beginning, partnership, service and expansion have been themes. At our inception, we chose to expand the breast cancer only model to serving individuals with any form of cancer. Early in the planning (2001 and 2002), a decision was made to use both Reiki and Healing Touch. Denver has a large number of both Reiki and Healing Touch providers, and the initial committee viewed this as an opportunity to bring together two often competing modalities into a program that would foster collaboration and mutual respect.

**In our training** and program delivery, we have focused upon strengthening the core principles that underlie all energy modalities and professional practice. The result has been a rich interplay between the modalities that has strengthened the program,

and many have cross-trained as a result.

**We have also focused** upon the partnerships that exist between the volunteer providers and those receiving services, and between the providers and a Program Coach, and have supported the providers with monthly support and continuing education meetings. In addition, we have cultivated and nurtured strong relationships between the LifeSpark program and its partner facilities. We now collaborate with 3 medical facilities, 2 churches and one clinic.

**Setting a standard:** LifeSpark has set a standard for volunteer programs that work in partnership with the medical community. This includes conducting criminal background checks and reference checks for all volunteers, requiring two class levels of either Reiki or Healing Touch, and requiring completion of 50 sessions before entering the program.

**Once accepted**, volunteers attend an 18 hour training program which includes psychological issues, boundaries, ethics, professionalism, and energetic issues with cancer. Trainers include a licensed psychotherapist, a holistic nurse with expertise in using energy therapies in the medical setting, and the LifeSpark Executive Director. Providers repeatedly tell us that this is one of the best trainings they have ever attended anywhere.

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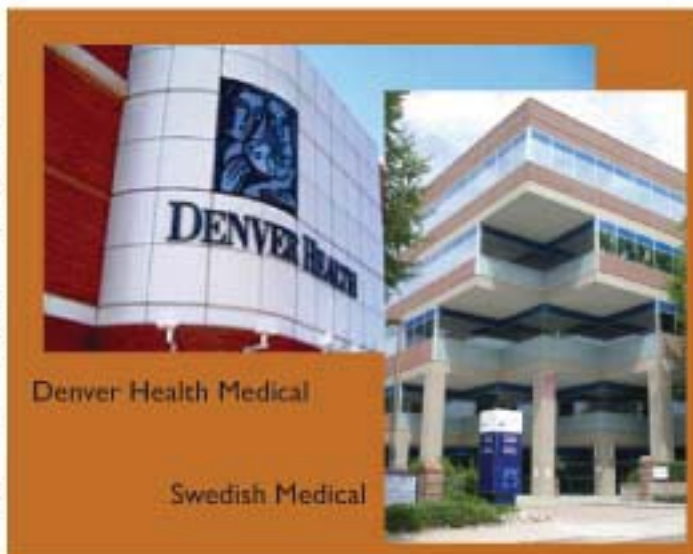


**Funding and Support:** One of LifeSpark's early lessons had to do with money. Funds pay for screening and matching people, training volunteers, educating the public, and coordination of the facilities. LifeSpark receives funds from a variety of sources, including grants, private donations, and fees for services.

This program was originally free, following the model of the organization where we offered the program. We observed that many of our participants did not seem to take the services very seriously and would often miss appointments without calling or notifying us. In an attempt to solve this problem, and to find new income sources, we

little as \$1 per session. We have found that many in our program are grateful that they are able to give something back and feel more empowered by the fees. It is seen as a way for them to pay this program forward.

In addition, while these fees only cover about 10% of program costs, they establish value for energy therapies and are creating interest and demand for these services.



Denver Health Medical

Swedish Medical



Tebo Family Center

**Change is afoot** in Colorado's hospitals: In 2001, the area hospitals were not ready for a program like this, so the program was entirely housed in the charitable wellness center established by Dr. Hamilton.

switched to donations, and then to voluntary fees. Finally, in 2005, upon incorporating LifeSpark, we settled on sliding scale fees based upon the federal poverty line. This was based upon expert legal advice. It gives us a guideline to follow, avoids any possibility of discrimination based upon income and makes the process straight forward and yet still very affordable.

It is our goal in LifeSpark that no one should have to go through cancer alone and that our services are available to everyone. Some participants pay as

**Today three hospitals** utilize our services. At Denver Health, one of the region's top trauma hospitals, the LifeSpark partnership focuses upon the indigent and non English speaking population. Sessions are provided within the infusion room and also within a private session room. Swedish Hospital in Denver draws upon an affluent patient population. Our program is allocated a patient exam room half time in the radiation oncology unit. In Boulder at the Foothills Community Hospital Tebo Family Medical Pavillion Cancer Center,

we have a very unique partnership in which we work with their Center for Integrative Care (which also offers HT and Reiki). They refer low-income patients to our program, which is housed in the same facility, after they have been through a series of sessions with them.

In 2008, LifeSpark receives referrals from health care professionals at many other hospitals. The interest in this program continues to grow as more and more people become familiar with energy therapies and how they can support one's journey through cancer.

Over the past 6 years, LifeSpark has developed a universal model of delivery that spans across cancer diagnosis, across modalities and across facilities and diverse health care systems. We believe it is the energy delivery system of the future.

Our next training program is February 13-15, 2009.

For more information please visit [www.LifeSparkNow.org](http://www.LifeSparkNow.org)