

IRISE ABOVE FOUNDATION

MEDIA KIT • 2021

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION



The iRise Above Foundation was founded by Gillian Lichota in 2017 following her own experience as a young, pregnant woman with breast cancer. Frustrated by the lack of resources and services available for younger women after treatment and the disempowering messaging that often trap these women in a victimhood mentality, Gillian sought to establish a foundation that would fill the unique needs of this group and empower them to heal and live well.

The iRise Above Foundation encourages women to seize control of their well-being during and after treatments and surgeries, with targeted, age-appropriate and integrative resources. Through wellness programs, webinars, retreats, and adventure trips designed by wellness and medical experts, these women are equipped with the latest research to improve their health through nutrition, exercise, and mindfulness practices. They are inspired to see their journey as a transformational one.

Instrumental to the foundation is its community of young women with breast cancer who all have the same goals: the desire to live full, vibrant lives aligned with their passion and purpose, and to move the needle on their prognoses. They are inspired to become the authors of their own stories, reclaim their power, discover their true authentic selves; to be broken open and transformed.



Our Vision

Young women feel empowered, supported, and inspired to cultivate an outstanding quality of life during and after breast cancer.

Our Mission

To provide young women with targeted, age-appropriate, and integrated health and wellness resources that enable them to rise above the residual effects of breast cancer, so that they can heal and live well.

Our Goal

To help each young woman become the creator and author of her own story, reclaim her power, thrive, and discover her true authentic self, moving forward after breast cancer.

Our Community

Connects young women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s after breast cancer with other like-minded women, and with health and wellness experts dedicated to helping these women to thrive in mind, body, and spirit.

Our Core Pillars

- INSPIRE
- EMPOWER
- SUPPORT

Our Philosophy

Believe the diagnosis, but challenge the prognosis.

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GILLIAN'S STORY

Gillian was at the height of her career and in the prime of her life when she and her husband, Boe, learned she was pregnant in 2012. But the couple was devastated when Gillian was told, just hours after her pregnancy was confirmed, that a mass she had discovered in her breast was malignant. She had stage III breast cancer.

Determined to protect her child while healing herself, Gillian underwent grueling treatments and surgeries before celebrating the birth of her son, Kailen, in 2013. Once she completed her treatments in 2015, Gillian celebrated her return to health — and stunned her medical team — by climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

Then, almost five years to the day of her first diagnosis, and shortly after giving birth to her daughter, Laykelyn, Gillian received the devastating news that the cancer had returned and metastasized. She was plunged into deep grief. But she emerged weeks later more determined than ever to seize control of her health, putting her scientific expertise to work by researching a variety of treatment modalities that combine the best of functional and traditional treatments. Her integrative approach has been a success: Four years later, her cancer is now stable and her antigen numbers are the lowest they have ever been.

Driven by a passion to empower, inspire, and support other young women diagnosed with breast cancer, and by the knowledge gained through her own experiences, Gillian founded the iRise Above Foundation. Through offerings like the iJourney and the iRise and Shine Wellness Training Program, as well as workshops, webinars, and adventure trips and restorative retreats, young women learn mind-body-spirit strategies that challenge the old paradigms and change perceptions of treating and healing from breast cancer. Gillian hopes to empower young women with breast cancer to self-advocate, and to use their experiences to live their most fulfilling and authentic lives, as she herself has done.

Gillian, now 44, lives in the Washington, D.C area with her husband, Boe, and children.



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THE URGENT NEED

Younger women with breast cancer face unique challenges that their older counterparts do not.

Many women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s are in the prime of their lives when they are devastated by a breast cancer diagnosis and disease that is often more advanced, more likely to metastasize, and less likely to respond to treatment than in post-menopausal women. The quality and length of these young women's lives are often profoundly impacted just as they are coming into their own as individuals, starting families, raising children, and rising in their careers.

Until recently, few resources were available to serve these younger women, leaving many feeling unsupported, uninspired, and disempowered when they need hope the most.

This iRise Above Foundation was established to change that. Founded by Gillian Lichota in 2017 following her own experience as a young, pregnant woman with breast cancer, the foundation empowers young women to seize control of their well-being during and after treatments and surgeries, with targeted, age-appropriate and integrative resources. Through wellness programs, webinars, retreats, and adventure trips designed by wellness and medical experts, these women are equipped with the latest research to improve their health through nutrition, exercise, and mindfulness practices. They are inspired to see their journey as a transformational one.

Most importantly, iRise connects young women with breast cancer to a community of like-minded thrivers with the same goals: the desire to live full, vibrant lives aligned with their passion and purpose, and to move the needle on their prognoses.

They are inspired to become the authors of their own stories, reclaim their power, discover their true authentic selves; to be broken open and transformed.



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HOW THE IRISE ABOVE FOUNDATION IS DIFFERENT

Created by young women after breast cancer, for young women after breast cancer.

The iRise Above Foundation bridges the gaps left by conventional breast cancer treatment and support services. Our targeted, age-appropriate programs, retreats, and webinars are carefully designed to address the unique needs of younger women with breast cancer during and after treatment. They are informed by the latest research provided by our Wellness Collective experts to help these women to overcome the residual effects of breast cancer treatments and surgeries, so they can heal and live well.

Our offerings include:

- The iRise Above Foundation's signature iJourney Program is a transformative, six-month plan featuring evidence-based exercise, yoga, mindfulness meditation, targeted nutrition, and positive psychology programming, among other offerings. Each woman works individually with a functional medicine life coach. The program begins with a yoga retreat and ends with a 2-week expedition. With in-person and virtual features, the plan provides women with versatile solutions to help them to feel their best, enjoy long-term survivorship, and thrive.
- The virtual 12-week wellness program provides participants with a flexible workout plan, yoga mindfulness practices, anti-cancer nutritional information, as well as weekly meetings with other participants and a functional medicine life coach.
- Adventure trips to breathtaking locations including Utah and Baja immerse women in nature and challenge them to step out of their comfort zones by trying activities like canyoneering and surfing.
- Restorative retreats focus on integrating mind, body and spirit through yoga and mindfulness practices.
- The webinar series offers free, monthly presentations from world renowned health experts on a variety of topics relevant to young women after breast cancer. Recent issues presented include optimal nutrition for lessening the likelihood of developing cancer and healing from treatment; the latest research on breast cancer treatments; challenges with sexual intimacy after cancer treatment; among many others.

Our Wellness Collective of experts in health and wellbeing includes:

- Fitness coaches
- Yoga movement practitioners
- Mindfulness and meditation practitioners
- Nutritionists
- Functional medicine life coaches
- Positive psychology experts
- Physicians who specialize in oncology, general and integrative medicine, and palliative care

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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“Combining physical, mental, and spiritual well-being were crucial to me during my breast cancer treatment nine years ago, but I had gotten away from them over the years. The iRise and Shine Wellness Training Program was exactly the boost that I needed to revitalize all of those areas of my life with the added support of a community of survivors who face similar challenges. This regimen armed me with the latest information about nutrition, exercise, sexual health, and spiritual well-being targeted to breast cancer survivors, but it was the encouragement of the community of survivors, and our compassionate trainers, that empowered me to make the most of these tools.

The weekly presentations about topics ranging from sexual health to spiritual discovery were not only informative and evidenced-based, they were delivered by compassionate and empathetic experts. Check-ins and light-hearted discussions on social media and via the fitness app added accountability. But my favorite element of the program were Jake Wright’s workouts, which are individually tailored to each participant. I am an avid runner who has participated in dozens of live and recorded exercise programs over decades, and I found Jake’s to be the most effective and accessible of them all. As a runner, I am leery of exercise programs that are too strenuous and require a lot of plyometrics – Jake’s workouts offer just the right amount of targeted-challenge that delivers results and they can be modified. I really appreciated his short videos that describe and demonstrate each exercise.

This program offered the tools and encouragement that I needed to take back control of my mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, and cultivate a rich and well-rounded life as a cancer survivor.”

*Kristi M., 46
Bethesda, MD USA*

“I found the iRise Above Foundation a month before finishing chemotherapy for breast cancer. It was perfect timing to support me during the most challenging time of my entire journey with breast cancer. Typically when treatment ends, patients are left to navigate their new world alone; not me! Thanks to the iRise Above Foundation I had support for all facets of my life. Their science-based mind-body-spirit approach to healing and living well after breast cancer (physical fitness and body movement, targeted nutrition, mindfulness and meditation, positive psychology programming, journalling, and weekly support-group check-in meetings) empowers me to challenge my prognosis and prevent recurrence. Plus the program brings me so much joy! I can’t thank Gillian, the Wellness Collective, and my incredible iRise Above sisters enough!”

*Marie F., 42
Culver City, CA, USA*

“I was fortunate that during my treatment I felt well enough to stay physically active, yet I found that all wellness programs catering to women with breast cancer were designed for an older population and there were not a lot of programs that would be applicable to young and active breast cancer patients. The exercise and training component of the iRise & Shine Wellness Training Program was vigorous enough to be challenging to even the most active participant, but customizable enough to appeal to someone new to working out. The seminars were very relevant to issues facing young women with breast cancer and the online community provided accountability and a place to share our triumphs and frustrations.”

*Karen R., 37
Toronto, ON, Canada*

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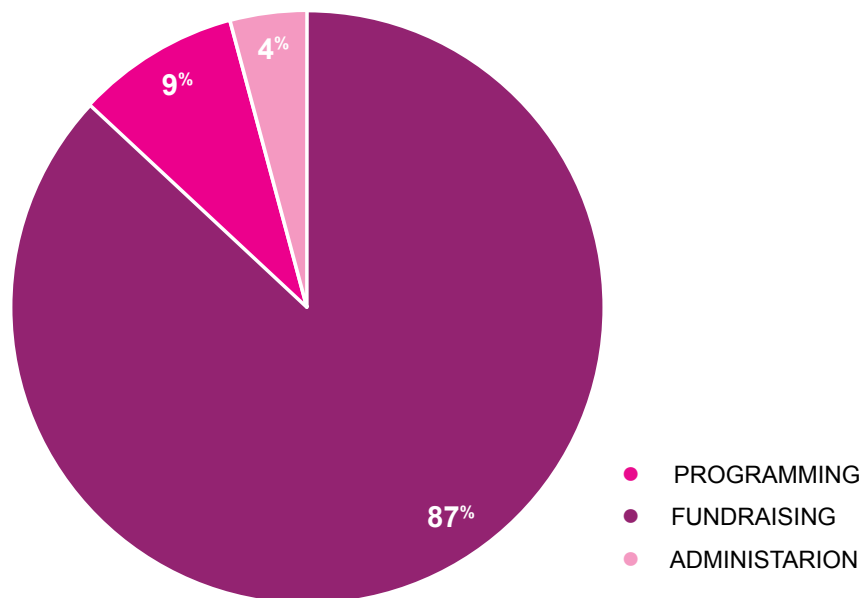
STATISTICS

The iRise Above Foundation offerings support the needs of young women by empowering them to seize control of their well-being during and after treatments and surgeries, with targeted, age-appropriate and integrative resources. Our wellness programs, webinars, workshops, restorative retreats, and adventure trips designed by wellness and medical experts, are designed to fill the gaps in support that millions of women experience during and after breast cancer treatment and have the potential to reach:

- More than 3.8 million US women with a history of breast cancer who were alive on January 1, 2019. Some of these women were cancer-free, while others still had evidence of cancer and may have been undergoing treatment.
- More than 150,000 breast cancer survivors who are living with metastatic disease, three-fourths of whom were originally diagnosed with stage I-III.
- Currently, more than 250,000 young women living in the US were diagnosed under the age of 40.

Source: [American Cancer Society](#)

HOW DO WE USE DONATIONS?



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REALITY CHECK

HOW BREAST CANCER IN YOUNG ADULTS IS DIFFERENT?

Diagnosing breast cancer in younger women (under 40 years old) is more difficult because their breast tissue is generally denser than the breast tissue in older women, and routine screening is not recommended.¹

Breast cancer in younger women may be more aggressive and less likely to respond to treatment.¹

Each year, approximately 70,000 men and women aged 15 to 39 are diagnosed with cancer in the US.² Breast cancer is also the most common cancer for women in this age group.³

In 2021, the American Cancer Society projected 81,550 new cases of invasive breast cancer are expected to be diagnosed in women in the US, along with 49,290 new cases of non-invasive (in situ) breast cancer.⁴

Every year, more than 1,000 women under age 40 die from breast cancer.⁵

Nearly 80% of young women diagnosed with breast cancer find their breast abnormality themselves.⁵

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women who are pregnant or have recently given birth. It occurs once in every 3,000 pregnancies.⁶

An estimated 30% or more of all breast cancer in young women is diagnosed in the few years after a woman has had a baby.⁷

Compared to older women, young women generally face more aggressive cancers and lower survival rates.^{8,9}

Mounting evidence suggests that breast cancer before age 40 differs biologically from the cancer faced by older women.¹⁰

The incidence of metastatic breast cancer at the time of initial diagnosis is rising in women under the age of 40.¹¹

We remain underrepresented in many research studies. This is because breast cancer occurs at a much lower rate among young adults than in our older counterparts.¹⁰

African American women under age 35 have rates of breast cancer two times higher than Caucasian women under age 35.¹²

African Americans under age 35 die from breast cancer three times as often as Caucasian women of the same age.¹²

Researchers believe that access to healthcare and the quality of healthcare available may explain these disparities.¹²

Research also shows that young African Americans are more likely to get aggressive forms of breast cancer than anyone else.¹²

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Media Inquires:

Ignition Strategic Consulting
Robyn Leenaerts
Robyn@32ignitytion.com
303-547-5264

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