

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Conquering heroes

Group uses business coaching techniques to help cancer survivors

By [Michelle Martinez](#)

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Lesley Delgado's watershed moment came about a year after her May 2004 breast-cancer diagnosis.

The owner of Southfield-based **Staffpro America Inc.** had successfully endured two lumpectomies, chemotherapy and radiation, and was reviving her business from a midyear slump. But picking up where she left off before the diagnosis was impossible, she said.

"I was looking at what I wanted to do with my life with new eyes," Delgado said.

The big change came, Delgado said, when she discovered the **C-Club for Cancer Conquerors** several months after her treatment had ended.

After one-on-one sessions with business coach Lisa Mininni, C-Club founder and lymphoma survivor, she cut back her commitments and hours at work, and spent more time with her husband and three children. The result, she said, is that her business is growing again and her relationship with her family has developed "in a way that's almost indescribable."



Life makeovers like that are why Mininni created the club about four years ago, she said.

"I discovered that there was no real program out there to help people with this transition," she said. "It's such a significant event; (survivors) really want to re-create what their lives look like. They want to create balance, and not work 80 hours a week and be married to their jobs."

Nonprofit cancer support groups long have provided patients and their families with emotional grounding and practical advice to adjust to life during, and after, cancer.

Where to go for support

- **C-Club for Cancer Conquerors**
Canton, (734) 223-3938
www.theclub.org
- **American Cancer Society** Southfield,
(248) 557-5353
www.cancer.org
- **Gilda's Club Metro Detroit** Royal Oak,
(248) 577-0800
www.gildasclubdetroit.org
- **Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute** Patient and Family Support Services Detroit,
(313) 576-9280
www.karmanos.org
- **University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center** Ann Arbor, (800) 865-1125
www.cancer.med.umich.edu

“We like to call it finding the new normal,” said Kristen Bernat, program manager at **Gilda’s Club Metro Detroit** in Royal Oak.

The C-Club is different, Mininni said, because it uses business coaching approaches to help survivors make permanent life and career changes.

Mininni, a human-resources executive-turned-business coach, started the C-Club as an offshoot of her 4-year-old Canton Township consulting company, **Excelerate Associates**. That company advises businesses on how to make cultural transitions associated with new corporate philosophies or mergers and acquisitions.

“It’s not about cancer,” she said. “It’s about reshaping and renewing your life.”

She may be on to something.

“Survivorship is a huge area now in cancer,” said Michelle Riba, medical director of the **University of Michigan’s** PsychOncology Clinic at its Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“The whole experience affects people in very individual ways. Most people want to go back to the way it was, and it just doesn’t.”

Kristi Schingeck, a C-Club member since 2003 and a breast-cancer survivor, said the C-Club helped her “press the reset button.”

After an intense two-day workshop and several conversations with Mininni, Schingeck quit her job as an office manager at a consulting company and moved from Detroit to Lansing to be closer to her family.

“Right now, I’m loving the life that I created,” she said.

C-Club membership costs \$30 a year and includes weekly inspirational e-mails, discounts on professional-development seminars and a quarterly newsletter with practical tips on how to move beyond cancer. But a lengthy list of other offerings such as retreats and one-on-one programs that range from about \$2,800 to \$4,000 for up to six months, are also available, Mininni said.

The C-Club isn’t a nonprofit, Mininni said, but it’s not a “money maker” either, she said.

“This is an educational organization that needs to be profitable to be in existence,” she said. “But I would love to offer this free to as many people as possible.”

The C-Club is trying to attract sponsors for individual memberships, group coaching sessions and retreats, as well as advertisers for its newsletters to help cover expenses for those who can’t afford the membership fee, said Janine Krasicky, a thyroid-cancer survivor and a C-Club member.

Krasicky owns **J9 Media**, a Ferndale-based public-relations company. Since her treatment, she’s been helping spread the word about the C-Club and other nonprofits, she said.

“I’ve cleared the clutter and really focused on ... pursuing things that are meaningful to me,” Krasicky said. “Life is about choices, and the C-Club helped me realize that.”