

# SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

Locally owned and independent Saturday, March 31, 2012 [www.santafenewmexican.com](http://www.santafenewmexican.com)



Nancy Hewitt, who produced a DVD featuring exercises taught by cancer recovery exercise specialist Lisa Gulotta, continues taking Gulotta's class at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center.

## Finding strength after cancer

By Deborah Busemeyer  
For The New Mexican

**W**hen the doctors declared Nancy Hewitt cancer free, she was too weak to open jars or slice bread. And she was on her own.

Her sole resource was an exercise pamphlet that recommended walking fingers up a wall like a spider and lifting a broom handle over her head.

"No one really tells you or helps you after you're done with treatment," she said.

It's a gap in the recovery process that Hewitt, 64, tried to remedy later as a way to give back to other survivors. It was a passionate effort that ended in disappointment. Despite a recent national push for cancer survivors to be active, exercise programs and support from foundations are scarce.

"Even though people are recognizing the need for post-surgical intervention, it's still not embraced," said Heather Leonard, founder of the Oregon-based Cancer Exercise Training Institute. "The focus is still on finding the cure, but people aren't dealing

### IF YOU GO

#### **Movement for Cancer Survivors:**

12:15 p.m. Tuesdays at Genoveva Chavez Community Center

#### **Yoga for Cancer Survivors:**

5:30 p.m. Thursdays at Christus St. Vincent Regional Hospital Cancer Center for current and former hospital patients

with the millions who are surviving cancer and need to improve their quality of life."

Exercise has always been important to Hewitt. Before breast cancer, she swam and lifted weights. After chemotherapy and surgery, she was physically depleted. Emotionally, she was coping with the loss of her breast.

Then she found Lisa Gulotta's movement class for cancer survivors at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center. Gulotta, a dancer, yoga teacher and personal trainer, had recently received her certification as a cancer exercise specialist from the Cancer Exercise Training Institute.

Please see **CANCER**, Page C-3



## Exercise instructor, cancer survivor create DVD to help others recover



**Lisa Gulotta assists Kit Ayala during a side-bend exercise in a cancer recovery class last week at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center. Gulotta is a certified cancer exercise specialist. PHOTOS BY NATALIE GUILLÉN/THE NEW MEXICAN**



# Cancer: Exercise can help boost confidence

## Continued from Page C-1

Throughout her 25 years of teaching classes, she wondered about students who left classes for cancer treatment. At a fitness conference, Gulotta heard of a course to teach personal trainers how to work with cancer survivors.

"I thought, 'There's a thread here,'" she said. "Maybe I need to understand more about what the body goes through when it's being diagnosed and treated for cancer and how I can help so these bodies who have been working out for years and have been happy and fit and structurally sound don't lose that, or how can I help them gain it back as quickly as possible."

The training involved comprehensive course work about 25 kinds of cancers, surgeries, treatments and side effects. Gulotta recertifies every two years as the institute updates its 330-page training manual with the latest medical information.

"The goal of the program is unfolding — that is, releasing, unraveling, unwinding, peeling away layers and opening up the heart, connecting with those deep potentials that were suspended or put on hold by diagnosis and treatment," Gulotta states on her website.

Because Hewitt felt dramatic results from Gulotta's class, she looked online to see what exercise options existed for cancer survivors. At that time,

in 2008, she found one book and no DVDs. Hewitt, a long-time producer, asked Gulotta if she would consider making her own video.

The two women — one a cancer survivor and the other her exercise instructor — formed 2 Women on a Mission, LLC. Their mission was to share Gulotta's program with millions of cancer survivors.

With support from Hewitt's professional contacts and their friends and family, the two women created *The Next Step, Vol. 1: Restorative Exercises After Breast Cancer*. Hewitt and her husband, Jeffrey, handled production while Gulotta crafted the script.

On the two-hour DVD, Gulotta leads a guided relaxation segment and four classes that are designed to gradually increase strength and range-of-motion, and help restore stamina and self-confidence.

Gulotta works on the body as a whole, fusing fitness, yoga and dance together to fit the needs of cancer survivors. "I craft restorative exercises and movement patterns that inspire bodies to undo and release at their own pace," she said.

Hewitt sent more than 70 packages promoting the DVD to cancer organizations, foundations, women's magazines and pharmaceutical companies. She wanted an organization to provide the DVD to survivors everywhere.

She learned most organizations focus only on research and early detection. No one appeared interested in helping survivors. One organization said, "It's not a fit." Another told Hewitt, "We don't do survivors."

"That was chilling for me," Hewitt said.

Heather Leonard understands Hewitt's frustration. She has trained cancer exercise instructors for 16 years without financial backers or much support.

"It takes a long time for people to accept something as safe, effective and necessary. Now there is so much research showing how effective exercise is," Leonard said.

Gulotta and Hewitt began their project a year before the American College of Sports Medicine's expert panel concluded in 2010 that exercise is safe during and after cancer treatments and can improve physical functioning, quality of life and fatigue.

In a June 2010 National Cancer Institute of America bulletin about the panel's recommendations, panelist Dr. Kathryn Schmitz said, "Our hope is that there will be more conversations about the need for formalized exercise programs for patients during and right after treatment — programs that will be the cancer equivalent to cardiac rehab."

Christus St. Vincent Regional Cancer Center has paid attention to the latest research. The center is offering nutrition education,

acupuncture, Gulotta's class, cooking classes and hand and foot massages during chemotherapy treatments, said Beth Earlozzi, nurse and clinical manager at the cancer center.

"One of the things that needs to be on the forefront is we need to offer more exercise for patients so they are doing appropriate exercise and not anything overpowering that could hurt them," Earlozzi said. "That's why Lisa is so wonderful, and there needs to be more of her because she knows how to guide people safely."

Making Gulotta available to more people was the reason the two women made the DVD, but it hasn't reached many yet. Stung by the lack of response from organizations, Hewitt has made the DVD available through Amazon for \$25.95.

Gulotta said she wants to find time to promote the DVD and make another one, as she continues full-time work as recreation manager at the Chavez Center. She would like to hold seminars to share her exercise program with everyone who needs it.

"When you feel good about your body, your confidence is lifted," she said. "Regardless of what you went through, you can walk tall."

For more information or to order *The Next Step, Vol. 1: Restorative Exercises After Breast Cancer*, look up [www.exerciseforbreastcancer.com](http://www.exerciseforbreastcancer.com).