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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Wheeler YMCA Renames Annual Spin-A-Thon in Honor of Cancer Hero Rick Varsell**

**PLAINVILLE, CT**– The Wheeler Regional Family YMCA announced today that The Wheeler YMCA Spin-a-thon will now be known as The Rick Varsell Memorial Spin-a-thon to Help Cancer Survivors Thrive to honor the memory of Rick Varsell, one of the first graduates of the Y's **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program.

“Rick Varsell was an outstanding man who became one of the most committed and dedicated advocates for our program,” says Executive Director Francine Coleman. “Thanks to his support, focus, and advocacy, **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA continues to provide support for countless individuals and families in our communities.”

Varsell was diagnosed with triple-negative stage-4 breast cancer in 2008 and given a grim prognosis. Three years after retiring as a mechanical engineer for Pratt & Whitney to face this disease head on, he was still beating the odds and enrolled in **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA, a 12-week program designed to help cancer survivors feel alive again.

Varsell not only felt alive, he thrived. A devoted program participant, Varsell came to the YMCA's group exercise programs six days a week, and, after graduation, became a mentor to new participants such as Sheryl Hughes Harle, now a **LIVESTRONG** mentor and instructor. “Rick had a vibrancy about him,” says Hines. “He was so alive even knowing that he was dying. It heartbreaking and inspirational at the same time.”

In 2013, Varsell began contributing to The Wheeler YMCA Spin-a-thon through a company he quietly created called The Whimsical Network. All proceeds benefit **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA, and as a presenting sponsor (giving at least \$2,500), Varsell's Whimsical Network was the driving force behind the Y's event fundraising efforts.

**WHEELER REGIONAL FAMILY YMCA**  
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And this year, Director of Health and Wellness Ben Romann -- with support from Varsell's widow Sandy -- is seeking yet another way to honor his memory. Romann is reaching out to sponsors to donate \$500 or more and become the new force behind The Whimsical Network. "Rick embodied everything whimsical. Which is exactly what you need when facing such a reality," says Romann. "But we all can learn from Rick, and I hope The Whimsical Network serves as a reminder for us all to stay positive in the face of adversity.

### **About The Rick Varsell Memorial Spin-a-thon to Help Survivors Thrive**

Our annual Spin-a-thon takes place on September 17, 2016, at the Wheeler Regional Family YMCA in Plainville from 8 a.m. to noon. All proceeds benefit the LIVESTRONG at the YMCA cancer survivor program.

### **About LIVESTRONG at the YMCA**

LIVESTRONG at the YMCA is a free 12-week program offered three times a year, and is designed to help survivors overcome the effects of fatigue and deconditioning from treatment and the disease. The program is for adult survivors from the point of diagnosis through the balance of life and includes a family membership during the length of the program. For more information on LIVESTRONG at the YMCA, please visit [ghymca.org](http://ghymca.org).

### **About the Wheeler Regional Family YMCA a branch of the YMCA of Greater Hartford**

The YMCA of Greater Hartford is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) charitable organization established in 1852 and is one of the nation's oldest YMCAs. In 2015, we served more than 117,000 people, including 66,000 children, in 56 towns and cities throughout the Capitol Region. The YMCA of Greater Hartford builds strong communities by helping individuals reach their fullest potential through transformative programs promoting our three tenants: Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. Follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/wheelerymca](https://facebook.com/wheelerymca), Twitter @wheelerymca, and Instagram @ wheelerymca.com. And visit us online at [ghmyca.org](http://ghmyca.org).

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