http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/011713/livestrongSM.png**Program to aid cancer survivors receives $20,000 gift from one of its own**

The Livestrong program at the Feith Family Ozaukee YMCA in Saukville, which helps people who are fighting cancer, got strong support from one of its first graduates.

The program will be funded for the next two years through a generous donation from Bruce Krier, who was in the first class that formed in February 2011.

Krier, who has prostate cancer, donated $10,000 for the program this year and $10,000 for next year. The first two years were funded by the Livestrong Foundation.

The Livestrong program, which is free, counters the devastating effects of cancer by improving physical, emotional and nutritional health. Groups of eight to 10 people who have undergone treatments for cancer meet with a trainer twice a week for 12 weeks.

So far, more than 60 people have benefited from the program at the Saukville Y. The seventh session started this month.

The Saukville Y was one of three YMCAs in the state to pilot the program in 2011.

Krier was honored Jan. 3 during an annual potluck reunion for people who completed the program in Saukville.

Keelyn Lyon, who was director of the Saukville Y when the program started and was instrumental in getting it for the branch, presented Krier with a special gift — a basket of apples to be used in an antique apple press that he was also given.

The apple press, which had belonged to Lyon's parents and Krier admired, was too heavy to bring to the Y, but it was delivered to Krier's Mequon home. He previously lived in Random Lake.

Lyon is now vice president of community leadership for the MetroMilwaukee YMCA.

Krier was diagnosed with stage-four prostate cancer in 2006 and has defied the odds by surviving so long.

In a 2011 interview in Ozaukee Press, when he was in the Saukville Y's Idle Ironman

program as well as the Livestrong program, Krier talked about the importance of staying physically fit and the prostate cancer research program in which he is participating.

“I was never expected to be able to do this type of thing,” he said. “The whole mind, body and spirit thing really works. You don’t realize it until you experience something like this.”

Lyon said Krier’s support goes far beyond his financial contribution.

“He’s very humble and has a passion for health and wellness,” she said. “His influence is far-reaching because of the depths of his relationships. People are attracted to him because of his authenticity. He’s a very successful businessman and willing to share his knowledge.

“He’s an out-of-the-box thinker and that’s how he’s treating his cancer. He accepts it with, ‘This is what God dealt me’ and looks for innovative ways to deal with it. He’s resourceful and resilient.”

Jennifer Clearwater, executive director of the Feith Family Ozaukee Y, said participants in the Livestrong program find the camaraderie with other people who have battled cancer is as valuable as the fitness programs.

“It’s a combination of helping people in recovery from cancer treatments get stronger and it’s also a network of people,” Clearwater said. “They become close as a class and also with people they meet at reunions who were in other classes. It’s a bond they share.”

That closeness extends to family members and staff, she said.

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Image Information: A BASKET OF APPLES was given to Bruce Krier (seated) in appreciation for his $20,000 donation to fund the Livestrong program for people fighting cancer for two years at the Feith Family Ozaukee YMCA in Saukville. Krier, who was in the first class in 2011, was surrounded by (from left, kneeling in front) YMCA wellness specialists Meghan Ehlers and Vanessa Schaller, (second row) Jennifer Clearwater (yellow scarf), executive director of the Saukville YMCA; Keelyn Lyon, vice president of community leadership for the MetroMilwaukee YMCA; benefactors Elizabeth and John Feith; Erica Richman (far right), YMCA wellness program manager; and graduates and supporters of the Livestrong program. Photo by Sam Arendt