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Gilda's Club cancer support center will temporarily relocate to Somers Point

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2 p.m. Update - After three years in Linwood, Gilda's Club South Jersey is leaving its clubhouse on Shore Road and relocating to Somers Point — but only for one year, until they can find a permanent home.

The non-profit organization, which provides support to individuals and families living with cancer, will be moving into the front wing of the former Ocean Point Health Care Center on Bay Ave. in early April.

"We're happy to be able to help Gilda's Club South Jersey continue its work in the community," Shore Memorial Health System President and CEO Albert L. Gutierrez said in a statement. "We know first hand the good this organization does to support cancer patients, their families and many, many others in the region."

Phone lines, a computer system, and signage will be added to the new clubhouse site, while Gilda's Club South Jersey CEO Sarah Griffith said that the organization's nearly 800 members would be invited "to help in the move, offer much needed financial support, and check out the new space."

The move comes after a lengthy battle with the city of Linwood over improvements and additional parking. According to Planning Board Solicitor Peter Burro, Gilda's Club was "in limbo" after the board declined to hear the club's application in January, with some members advising that they appear before the Zoning Board on March 4 instead.

"We have loved being at 300 Shore Road," Griffith said. "We had a great landlord in the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. It's been a wonderful partnership and the program has grown and thrived."

Not that she didn't have some regrets over how everything turned out.

"Would we have preferred not to do an interim one-year move?" she asked. "Yes. (but) will we make the most of our move? Yes. Ocean Point Health Care Center was able to offer us more space, and our program (members) are frankly delighted. There's not any scheduling conflicts, and if we want to run a program, we'll run it."

She added that the organization will soon be receiving a \$500,000 pledge from Wawa, which along with additional donations would hopefully allow Gilda's Club South Jersey a permanent home.

"We've probably looked at 75 properties," Griffith said. "We haven't found a place that's an absolute fit for us. We want something that's somewhat homelike but is zoned commercial, has about 30 parking spaces and is accessible — both in (handicap access) and in terms of an address where people have

some clue where they're going.”

Information on programs and activities run by Gilda's Club South Jersey can be found at www.gildasclubsouthjersey.org.

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