



Lois M. Gackenhaimer,  
Ph.D. Ed, M.S.N., R.N, N.H.A

**C**ancer Alliance of Help & Hope, Inc. has announced that Lois M. Gackenhaimer, Ph.D. Ed, M.S.N., R.N, N.H.A, has joined its Board of Directors.

Gackenhaimer has more than 50 years experience in a variety of management, teaching and leadership roles in the nursing field. An incredibly gifted caregiver, instructor and administrator, she began her career at Faulkner Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. Her work in the Palm Beaches has included serving as Director of Medicross Nursing Services, Inc., Assistant Administrator and Director of Nursing Ridge Terrace Health Care Center, and, since 1990, as Executive Director/ President of Academy for Nursing and Health Occupations.

Among numerous other accolades, she was awarded *First Place Distinction Award for Best Program in the Nation, 2000-2006, Leadership Award and Nurse of the Year Award* from the Palm Healthcare Foundation.

The Cancer Alliance of Help & Hope, Inc., based in Palm Beach is a charitable organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of local children, women and men and their families, who are touched by cancer, by providing need-based financial assistance, information resources and access to services and support groups in the community. CAHH seeks to provide respite to those receiving a devastating cancer diagnosis. As a 501(C)(3) formed in 2003, the

organization has helped thousands of cancer patients and their families who live and/or receive treatment in Palm Beach County and dispersed over \$4 million. Cancer Alliance of Help & Hope focuses on assisting patients with their ordinary living expenses such as rent and mortgage, utilities, auto and health insurance, car payments, food and other basic necessities. For more information call 561.748.7227 or visit [www.cahh.org](http://www.cahh.org).



Joanna Peluso

**J**oanna Peluso has been appointed to the position of Project Director for *Healthier Jupiter*, a Palm Health Foundation *Healthier Together* initiative. Peluso will lead the place-based initiative to address the Jupiter community's most complex health issues by convening community members and organization leaders to promote healthy eating and active living opportunities.

Peluso's career trajectory with *Healthier Jupiter* has been on a steady and rapid rise beginning as an AmeriCorps Vista in 2017 and moving up to outreach coordinator in 2018 and project manager in 2019. Her experience, combined with a degree in sociology, has prepared Peluso well to take on her new role as leader of the initiative.

Peluso's *Healthier Jupiter* achievements to-date include leading the implementation, analysis and reporting of a community health assessment to identify priority health needs and

collaborating with local leaders to advocate for policy, systems and environment changes. As Project Director, Peluso will continue to drive transformative change as defined by community members and committee volunteers and in partnership with **Jupiter Medical Center**.

Peluso will also lead *Healthier Jupiter's* signature *Mini Grant* program to fund innovative projects that have measurable health impact. The grants fund pilot ideas in four focus areas: increasing the availability and affordability of fresh, healthy foods; helping individuals become more physically active on a regular basis; encouraging people to engage mentally and physically to practice healthy behaviors; and supporting changes in the environment and community policies that promote equitable opportunities for healthy living.

"The last three years have been deeply rewarding as I have watched *Healthier Jupiter* become a catalyst for encouraging residents to live healthier lives and create innovative programs to help others do the same," said Peluso. "I am passionate about elevating the community's voice. Palm Health Foundation has created a platform to help me do that through *Healthier Jupiter*."

Peluso's passion for community health and advocacy were evident in positions she held prior to becoming *Healthier Jupiter's* Project Director. She served as community impact evaluator as an AmeriCorps Vista for El Sol in Jupiter and helped draft the West Palm Beach Mayor's *Village Initiative Action Plan*. Peluso's Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with an Interdisciplinary Concentration in Environmental Studies from The College of New Jersey has also been beneficial to her in her role as she works to support health communities in a variety of ways.

"Joanna's extraordinary dedication and talent made her the perfect person to take on the Project Director position," said **Patrick McNamara**, President and CEO of Palm Health Foundation. "She is already a trusted voice in the Jupiter community, and we know she will continue to be a force for healthy living for all residents."

*Healthier Jupiter* is funded by Palm Health Foundation as a *Healthier Together* community, a long-term, place-based funding approach designed to solve a community's most complex healthcare issues, neighborhood by neighborhood.

For more information call 561.833.6333 or visit [palmhealthfoundation.org](http://palmhealthfoundation.org).