

Cindy Coney, M.Ed.

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Professional Profile

As former head of a large nonprofit and past Chair of the Lupus Foundation of America's National Board of Directors, Cindy Coney is widely recognized for her work in health education and specifically her pioneering work in resiliency. A highly skilled speaker and trainer, she travels extensively sharing her first-hand patient perspective (she was diagnosed with the autoimmune disease lupus as a young woman) and professional expertise with thousands, delivering inspirational keynote speeches and educational training to patient, healthcare and nonprofit organizations worldwide, and acting as a patient advocate to government, pharmaceutical companies and research groups.

An articulate, educated, and passionate voice representing patients, Cindy has testified before the FDA Advisory Panel to help secure the first new drug for lupus in 50 years. She has been selected numerous times to serve alongside doctors and researchers on both the U.S. Department of Defense Patient Reviewer for the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program and the International Task for to Define Remission in SLE.

A resiliency expert, Cindy's unique combination of personal, professional and academic experience offers the entire healthcare community, from patients to those who support and treat them, an arsenal of resources, strategies and responses to the challenge of treating and living with chronic illness. Committed to the idea that strengthening individual resiliency skills can greatly impact patient outcomes, her workshops, conference presentations and retreats offer "how-to" action steps for patients learning to live the best life possible despite illness. Based on resiliency research, the federally recognized SAMSHA Model Program curriculum she helped developed continues to positively impact the lives of hundreds of thousands nationwide.

Cindy's energetic, humorous and relatable personal style combines with professional experience and expertise to engage both patients and providers alike. Her topics include the most relevant and timely issues in managing and living with chronic illness.

In addition to public speaking, Cindy is a commissioned artist working in acrylic paints from her home studio in Florida. Whether making fine art or delivering an inspirational keynote speech, both outlets provide her with endless opportunities for creativity and expression.

Education and Certifications

Master of Educational Leadership, 1991, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education, 1976, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

Certificate of Nonprofit Board Education, 2012, BoardSource, Washington, DC

Certified Prevention Professional, The Florida Certification Board, Tallahassee, FL

Experience and Highlights

Acrylic Artist, Cindy Coney Art

Tampa, FL 2020-Present

Working primarily in acrylic on canvas, Cindy strives to capture the feelings of joy that only being fully alive and present to the beauty around us can bring. Having studied alongside many fine artists, she knows there is always more to learn and the challenge of that excites her. The spirit of her work is influenced by a love of nature, and by the deep feelings and emotions of her personal journey as a person living with lupus.

President, Monarch Training and Consulting, LLC

Tampa, FL 2006-Present

- Presented keynote speeches and workshops for voluntary health organization's events nationwide on topics such as coping with illness, minimizing stress and living beyond the challenges of illness.
- Delivered workshop presentations and training to nonprofits nationwide in the areas of business planning, diversifying revenue, earned income, board development and sustainability.
- Selected by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of eleven professionals to lead trainings on school health self-assessment and planning nationally.
- Developed the curriculum and training for a wellness program for Charter Schools in Hillsborough County.
- Consulted with all chapters of a large disease-based nonprofit to create Engagement Service Plans.
- Trained coalition board members and staff statewide through a grant from the Department of Children and Families on transitioning to sustainable nonprofit organizations.
- Conducted statewide trainings for Florida Department of Education and Florida Department of Health in School Health Assessment and Planning.
- Offered workshops on change in challenging corporate situations through LifePath, Inc.
- Implemented a district wide Wellness Program for Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS), including training teams from each school HCPS is the third largest district in FL and the 8th largest in the country.
- Delivered numerous Prevention Frameworks Trainings statewide through the Center for Prevention Workforce Development.
- Co-created the Prevention Supervision Course for the Center for Prevention Workforce Development.

Executive Director/Vice President, Mendez Foundation

Tampa, FL 1987-2006

- Guided the Mendez Foundation from a locally based non-profit to a thriving nationally recognized organization through the creation of a national training and implementation model based on resiliency research.
- Secured grants worth in excess of \$1,500,000 per year to provide prevention education to over 60,000 students annually in Tampa, Florida.
- Created a sustainable earned income revenue stream for the Foundation generating millions of dollars per year for the organization.

- Coordinated evaluation of prevention programs which led to recognition as a SAMSHA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) Model Programs-the highest designation a prevention program can achieve.
- Developed Maximizing Life Training and Consulting Programs for Optimal Health and Balance and trained in the program nationally.
- Managed a staff of 40 diverse employees including prevention specialists, graphic designers, accountants and support staff.
- Directed a team that developed the Too Good for Drugs- K-12th Grade Drug Prevention Curricula, Too Good for Violence- K-8th Grade Violence Prevention Curriculum, Too Good for Drugs and Violence-High School, and Too Good for Drugs and Violence-After School.
- Wrote and Implemented Training of Trainers Institutes for 2000 Teachers nationwide.
- Conducted trainings and international conference presentations on building resiliency

Director of National Programs, Mendez Foundation

Tampa, FL 1980-1987

- Orchestrated the implementation of curriculum/programming and training in 3,500 School Districts Nationwide.

Teacher, Hillsborough County School System

Tampa, FL 1976-1979

Patient Advocacy and Expertise

- Member, Lupus Voices Council – Lupus Accelerating Breakthroughs Consortium (Lupus ABC), created by the Lupus Research Alliance
- Grant reviewer for Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)
- Programmatic Panel Member for U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Lupus Research Program
- Promising Pipeline panel member at Lupus Foundation of America National Policy Summit
- Selected multiple times by the Department of Defense as a consumer peer reviewer to evaluate grants for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program.
- Selected as the only patient representative from North America to participate in the International Task Force to Define Remission in lupus. Task Force Meeting, Zurich, Switzerland, August, 2014.
- Invited to present to the FDA Advisory Panel to help secure approval of Benlysta, the first drug for lupus approved in over 50 years

Publications

Co-author, with multidisciplinary working group: “Key Considerations for Advancing Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy for Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE): A Multi-Partner/Disciplinary Working Group Perspective.” RMD Open (2025). Accepted for publication.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. “Wishing Invisible Illness Was Imaginary,” Lupus Foundation of America. (Oct 21, 2014). E-newsletter and web guest blog.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Dealing with Holiday Stress," *Ask the Expert Series*. Lupus Foundation of America. Sept, 2014. Web.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "I Wonder." *Rheum to Heal: Stories of Health and Humanity at Hospital for Special Surgery*. July 31, 2014. Web.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Finding the Energy to Play," Lupus Foundation of America. Feb 18, 2014. E-newsletter and web guest blog.

Coney, C. (2013, December). "Walk this Way" (M. McMillen. Lupus Now Magazine, Interviewer).

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Lupus and Stress," *Ask the Expert Series*. Lupus Foundation of America. March 4, 2013. Web and Audio podcast.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Intellectual Property for Nonprofit Organizations." *Healthcare Georgia Foundation*, Publication #56, November 2011.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Earned Income: A Critical Resource for Sustainable Nonprofit Health Organizations." *Healthcare Georgia Foundation*, Publication #52, April 2011. Print.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "15 Questions with Ms. Cindy Coney: Dealing with Stress - Balancing Family, Friends, Activities and Lupus." *Lupus Foundation of America*. Nov, 2010. Web.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "A Gift of Presence." *Scleroderma Voice*, June 2007: pg 11. Reprint.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Don't Worry, Be Happy." *Wellness Manager*, Fall 1999: pg. 2. Print.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "The Gift of Presence." *Wellness Manager*, Summer 1999: pg. 2. Print.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. "Tickle Me Turkeys." *Wellness Management*, Winter 1999: Vol. 15, No. 4. Print.

Coney, Cindy, M.Ed. *The Wild Woman's Guide to Living with Illness - a Journal and Tape Program* (Living with Illness). N.p.: Mendez Foundation, 1999. Print/media: Journal and Tape.

Sampling of Selected Keynote Addresses

"Happiness from the Inside Out," American College of Rheumatology/ Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals, Boston, MA, November, 2014.

"Unleashing Your Unsinkable Spirit," Lupus Foundation of America, Tri-State Chapter, Philadelphia, PA October, 2014.

"My Story of Hope," Questcor Pharmaceuticals Annual Sales Meeting, Dallas, TX, July, 2014.

“Unleashing Your Unsinkable Spirit,” Lupus Foundation of America, Florida Chapter, Orlando, FL June, 2014.

“It Makes a Difference to This One,” Health Council of Southeast Florida, Regional Health Navigation Symposium, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, May, 2014.

“Unleashing Your Unsinkable Spirit,” Lupus Foundation of America, North Carolina Chapter Summit, Charlotte, NC, January, 2014.

“Happiness from the Inside Out,” Lupus Foundation of America, Lupus: Learning and Living Patient Education Series, Denver, CO, Raleigh, NC, Richmond, VA, Cincinnati, OH, Detroit, MI, New York City, NY, (various dates) 2013.

“Caring Beyond the Chart,” Rheumatology Nurses Association Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, July, 2013.

“Happiness from the Inside Out,” Spina Bifida Association, Anaheim, California, July, 2011.

“Maximizing Life with Lupus,” World Lupus Congress, Vancouver, BC, May, 2010.

“The Wisdom Within” and “Maximizing Life-Minimizing Stress,” Scleroderma Foundation Annual Conference, July 2009, Philadelphia, PA.

Conference Presentations by Organization

American School Counselor Association, Association of Junior Leagues International, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, Florida Blue Foundation, Florida Department of Education, Elementary Principals Association, International Drug Prevention Conference (Belize, Central America), Pulmonary Hypertension, National Wellness Association, People Advancing the Caribbean Community (Nassau, Bahamas), Texas Middle School Conference, National League of Cities, National Middle School Association, National YMCA, Florida Department of Education.

Volunteer Activities and Elected Positions

- Lupus Foundation of America, Inc., former National Board Chair, Board Member (10 years), Education Committee Chair, Speaker nationwide at Patient Symposiums and Summits.
- Junior League of Tampa, President, Provisional Education Chair, Minority Youth - Leadership Project Chair, Child Advocacy Research Unit Chair, Mini Grants Chair, and other positions. Recipient of the 2015 Sustainer of the Year award, given for outstanding volunteer service in a community service organization or through community service over a significant number of years.
- Tampa Walk to End Lupus Now, Founder. Annual walk raising over \$150,000 per year for patient support and research.
- Mary Lee’s House and the Center for Abused and Neglected Children, Board Member
- United Way of Greater Tampa, Community Advisory Board

- Children's Board of Hillsborough County, Community Advisory Board
- University of Tampa Board of Counselors
- Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce
- Children's Home Auxiliary Board
- H.B. Plant Museum Society, Treasurer
- Alpha Delta Pi Alumnae Association, President and Treasurer
- Friends of Public Education