

SURVIVOR TIMES

A newsletter for cancer survivors, by cancer survivors.
Sponsored by The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program.

Supermodel for Hope

by Loretta O'Donnell

Beyoncé had nothing on me recently when I modeled a gold sequined designer backless gown with train down the runway during New York City's Fashion Week. I must have been royalty in a past life because acting like a celebrity for a day came naturally.

Having never modeled before or even watched the modeling reality shows on TV, I was a little nervous.

But I escaped my biggest fear that the gown wouldn't fit. I had only seen

a photo of the gown before the day of the event and it was over the top glitzy and form fitting. No margin for error and no way to wear Spanx with the back cut down to my waist.

Just in case, I brought my own gown as a backup if I couldn't squeeze into the designer's. I was modeling for a cause, a fundraiser for "Say Yes to Hope," which I had recently joined after the cancer in my liver progressed. The timing was perfect as the founder was organizing the fashion show and I was invited to be one of the women survivors from around the country to participate.

Not only was I able to wear a glamorous gown for the night, I had my hair and makeup done by professionals while in my robe in my hotel room at the W where we spent the night. Take that JLo! That the two could work simultaneously amazed me, but before long I looked in the mirror and loved the new sophisticated me.

The caterpillar who thought her life was over suddenly turned into a butterfly!

had seen an article about me for the show online and came to videotape the evening and interview me. So there I was with my entourage of three old school friends, two people with TV cameras and lights, hair dresser and makeup artist in my tiny New York room. A star is born!

Now all I had to do was walk and turn and pose and smile and wave to 200 people without tripping or having a wardrobe malfunction. When people on the TV talent

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To top it off, two Columbia University journalism graduate students



Loretta O'Donnell

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Letter from the Editor:

Welcome to the eleventh issue of the *Survivor Times* – a newsletter for cancer survivors, by cancer survivors. This edition coincides with Cooper Cancer Institute's annual Survivors Day celebration. I thought it would be the perfect timing to bring you some updated and valuable information regarding Cancer Survivorship...

The CDC and the LIVESTRONG Foundation led a public health effort to address the issues faced by the growing number of cancer survivors living with, through, and beyond cancer. Enclosed is a summary through and from that collaboration The National Action Plan for Cancer Survivorship: Advancing Public Health:

According to the American Cancer Society, there are now more than 13.7 million cancer survivors in the United States. That number is expected to grow to nearly 18 million by 2022. Some survivors may live with cancer as a chronic disease requiring periodic treatments, while others may go into long-term remission. Many will lead normal lives with few side effects, if any. In fact, two-thirds of survivors report that cancer has not had a significant long-term impact on their lives.

As many survivors have learned, however, recovery is not always the end of the cancer experience. Even several years after successful treatment, cancer recurrence is always a possibility. Toxic cancer therapies can leave you with health issues that require lifelong surveillance. Finally, recovering from the social and emotional trauma of cancer can take longer than recuperating from treatment.

After decades of focus on treating cancer, researchers now face the challenge of helping survivors achieve a good quality of life for many years after treatment has ended. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute, 64% of adults diagnosed with cancer today can expect to be alive in five years. For children, survival rates range between 70% and 92%, with the 10-year survival rate at 75%.

Stages of Cancer Survivorship

Since the 1980s, cancer survivors and doctors have attempted to describe the stages that cancer survivors typically experience. Most break it down into some version of the three stages outlined below:

Living with cancer refers to the experience of receiving a cancer diagnosis and any treatment that may follow. During this time, patients will undergo treatment and may be asked to join a clinical trial

to study new cancer therapies. Patients and their caregivers may be offered services to help cope with emotional, psychological and financial concerns.

Living through cancer is the period following treatment in which the risk of cancer recurring is relatively high. Many patients are relieved that treatment is over, but anxious about no longer seeing their cancer doctor on a regular basis. During this stage, patients typically see their cancer doctor two to four times a year depending on their circumstances.

Living beyond cancer refers to post-treatment and long-term survivorship. While two out of three survivors say their lives return to normal, one-third report continuing physical, psychosocial or financial consequences. During this stage, most survivors go back to the care of their primary physician. Ideally, they will have developed a long-term health care plan with their cancer doctor to be implemented by their regular doctor.

This edition of the *Survivor Times* encompasses heartwarming and inspirational stories from cancer survivors **living with cancer, living through cancer and living beyond cancer.**

Whatever stage you fall under, the common denominator is quality of life. It is with this focus in mind that the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine program at Cooper Cancer Institute is committed to providing cancer survivors with access to an array of complementary medicine experiences. Our programs are designed to help survivors discover ways to cope with the stress and anxiety of their diagnosis, and to alleviate some of the side effects of their treatment by focusing on healing the mind, body and spirit.

My goal through this program is to bring together, empower and engage cancer survivors to incorporate complementary medicine options into their lives.

This newsletter is the outcome of one such special program offered throughout the year.

If you would like to submit an article, please contact me at mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu.



Bonnie Mehr
Editor, *Survivor Times*
Manager, the Dr. Diane Barton
Complementary Medicine Program
Cooper Cancer Institute



Signature Class SERIES

A FREE series of classes for cancer patients and their caregivers.

YOGA STRETCH FOR CANCER SURVIVORS

Yoga Stretch for Cancer Survivors is especially beneficial for people with flexibility limitations due to a variety of degenerative conditions, as well as those recovering from surgery.

DATES: July 2 & 30; August 6; September 4;
October 1 & 29; November 5; December 3

TIME: 12 P.M. – 1 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

QI GONG

Qi Gong is a modality several centuries old using movement and breath as a way to increase, harness and move the Vital Energy that is within and around us. It can increase focus, improve balance and flexibility, increase circulation, and relax you.

DATES: July 9 & 23; August 13 & 27;
September 10 & 24; October 8 & 22;
November 12; December 10

TIME: 12 P.M. – 1 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

MEDITATION FOR RELAXATION

Join practitioner Jo Anna Carey and you will be led on a journey of self-discovery through the deeply relaxing practice of meditation for the purpose of nurturing and supporting yourself through life's stresses and joys. Enjoy experiencing a variety of meditation techniques and breathing exercises.

DATE: July 16; August 20;
September 17; October 15

TIME: 12 P.M. – 1 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

LIVE & LEARN

A New Perspective for the Cancer Patient

TIME: 11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

- **Thursday, June 13, 2013: Reinventing Yourself After a Cancer Diagnosis:** No matter when; yesterday, or 20 years ago; a cancer diagnosis is life changing... we will evaluate how it has changed your life and where you are heading.
PRESENTED BY: *The Cooper Cancer Institute Behavioral Health Team*
- **Thursday, September 26, 2013: "In the Country of Illness," Comfort and Advice for the Journey:** Come discuss this thought provoking book and concepts from author Robert Lipsyte. Invaluable advice for patients and for the people who love & care for them.
PRESENTED BY: *Dr. Cori McMahon, PsyD, the Cooper Cancer Institute Behavioral Health Team*
- **Thursday, October 24, 2013: 50 Food Tips that Will Enhance Your Health:** Cooper Cancer Institute's Expert Oncology nutritionist, Alicia Michaux, MS, RD.
PRESENTED BY: *Alicia Michaux, MS, RD, Outpatient Oncology Dietitian, Cooper Cancer Institute*
- **Thursday, November 14, 2013: Kick Start the Holiday Season... Come Make Something from the Heart:** A special Creative Arts for Healing class offers you the opportunity to choose from a variety of different projects to make.
FACILITATOR: *Andrea Meehan*
- **Thursday, December 12, 2013: Annual Holiday Party:** for Cancer Survivors only. Please feel free to bring a dessert for all to share. Limited space available, so please register.

Pre-registration is required for all workshops.
Please call: **1.800.8.COOPER** (1.800.826.6737).

You can also register for these classes online at
events.CooperHealth.org

Please note that workshops are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather.

THE DR. DIANE BARTON Complementary Medicine Program 2013



2013 Creative Arts for Healing WORKSHOPS

Location:

Town Square Building, 931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

Time: 11:00 a.m. –12:30 p.m.

Dates:

- **June 19: Personalize Tote** • **Sept. 11: Create Greeting Cards**
- **Sept. 25: Trendy Jewelry** • **Oct. 9: Fall Centerpieces**
- **Oct. 23: Affirmation Bracelets** • **Nov. 6: Decoupage**
- **Dec. 20: Ceramic Ornaments**

This class is free for cancer survivors and there is no cost for materials. Please register for each class so the appropriate number of supplies can be provided. Please call:

1.800.8.COOPER (1.800.826.6737).

You can also register online at events.cooperhealth.org.

Therapeutic Massage & Reflexology Days

Attention all cancer survivors: Come enjoy the mind body spirit benefits of therapeutic chair massage and reflexology.

Dates: June 18; September 10 & 24; October 8 & 22; November 5 & 19; December 10

Time: 9:30 a.m. –1:00 p.m.

Location: Town Square Building
931 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ 08043

Bonnie's Book Club

A story is always better if you have someone to share it with... what could be better than sharing it with a group of friends who have read it too?

- **June 19: Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker**
by Jennifer Chiaverini
- **September 25: The Chaperone**
by Laura Moriarty
- **October 23: The Time Keeper**
by Mitch Albom
- **November 20: Freedom**
by Jonathan Franzen

Time: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: Town Square Building,
931 Centennial Blvd.
Voorhees, NJ 08043

This book club is for cancer survivors. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact **Bonnie Mehr** at **856.325.6646**



Cooper
Cancer Institute



"I have Cancer, Cancer Doesn't Have Me."

by Tony Serra

I don't remember when I heard it, or who said it, but that's the way I've approached life since I was diagnosed 10 years ago.

I was approaching my 60th birthday and it was time for a colonoscopy. I had no symptoms or problems at the time, so I was surprised by the results. The test revealed that I had colon cancer and it had spread to my liver. I had the surgery and started chemotherapy within a few weeks. My surgeon (Dr. Mark Pello) set up an appointment with Dr. Alex Hageboutros at Cooper Cancer Institute for my Chemo treatments. The first thing I asked Dr. Alex was "How long can I live with this?" He told me that some people have survived up to 10 years. So I thought to myself that I can deal with that; besides, I'll probably get killed on my motorcycle before then.

Dr Alex and I hit it off right away. I told him that I was a car and motorcycle nut and my treatment would have to allow for my touring activities. He assured me that we could work it out.

In August 2003 Harley Davidson was hosting their 100th anniversary celebration in Milwaukee WI. Since I had my surgery in May 2003, I had about 10 weeks before the 1200 mile ride. After 8 weeks I got the okay from Dr Pello for the trip. I'm not sure what I would have done if he didn't agree; because there was no way I wanted to miss the biggest 8 day biker party ever. Three days after my chemo treatment, I loaded my up my Harley with my gear and a cooler for my Neupogyn shots I gave to myself to replenish my white blood cells. Once on the road with a group of my biker friends, enjoying the ride, the wind and the scenery, cancer never entered my mind.

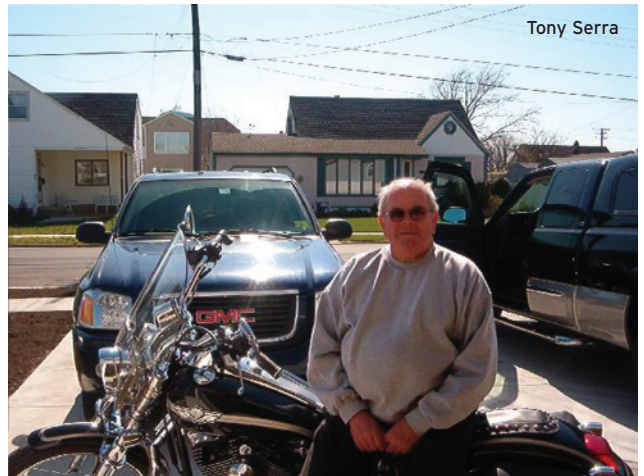
Since then we have ridden to New Hampshire, South Carolina, South

Dakota, and all day trips to nowhere; all scheduled around my chemo treatments. I wasn't always feeling well when I left home, but after a few miles in the saddle, all seemed right in the world.

After a few years of enjoying life to the fullest, I had put on a few extra chins so a few of us decided to join Weight Watchers. To make things interesting we decided that we each would give \$5.00 to the person who lost the most weight each week. At the weigh in one week I had lost 8 lbs. We made such a big deal about the bet that everyone else there for their weigh in would gather around to see who won. Everyone cheered as they rest of the guys gave me the money; all except one buddy who loudly proclaimed "He cheated, he has cancer." A few people were shocked, but most of us thought that it was hilarious.

A lot of people fighting cancer seem to start appreciating the little things more. They try to get closer to family and friends. They find enjoyment in traveling and communing with nature. They reassess their priorities and try to concentrate on what is really important in their lives. While that approach works for many, it just didn't fit with my personality. I have always known that I have been blessed with a fantastic family and group of friends and I didn't want to behave any differently just because I have cancer. I don't treat them any differently and they don't treat me any differently because of my illness. If they have any questions about the disease or its treatment, we discuss it openly and honestly just as though we were talking about the weather.

I don't want to sound as if I'm not taking this seriously because I am. I



also feel that if I don't try to keep my life as normal as possible, I wouldn't be true to myself.

I also feel very fortunate to have found a treatment center like Cooper Cancer Institute that has made my condition much easier to bear. I credit the doctors for putting a treatment schedule in place that has been successful for 10 years. I am extremely grateful to the administrative and nursing staff for putting up with my antics and making me feel welcome and important when I arrive. I can't say enough about the efficiency, cooperation and professionalism the nurse's show to all the patients. Lori Tritschler, an outstanding nurse seems to have drawn the short straw when it comes to treating me, but when the need arises; all of the others fill in so that nothing skips a beat. I travel 120 miles (round trip) to get treated at Cooper Cancer Institute in Voorhees. There are other places that I could go to that are much closer, but leaving Cooper is not an option. The doctors and nurses have kept my cancer in check for 10 years. I guess that makes me a survivor.

A Glass Half Full

by Ricci Sheridan

On July 20, 2012 I was diagnosed with Stage IIIB Triple Negative, invasive and aggressive breast cancer. Words cannot describe the devastation I felt. As a 42 year old wife and

mother of two young girls with no family history of breast cancer, five prior "clear" mammograms and a negative BRCA gene, there was no rhyme or reason as to why the nearly six centimeter tumor had developed on my breast. I thought my life was

over, that I had been given a death sentence. I existed in a zombie like state for nearly two weeks before I landed in the capable, caring hands of the physicians at Cooper Cancer Institute. Among my amazing team of doctors was (and continues to be) a guy by the name of Dave Moore. I first met Dave when he bounded into the infusion room while I was undergoing the first of

eighteen chemotherapy treatments. After he introduced himself as a therapist with the behavioral department, I begrudgingly said "hello" and pretended to be interested in the services he was offering. In between feeling sorry for myself, I filled out the questionnaire he left with me that would allow him to get to know me a little better. And so I answered questions like "when are you most happy?" with answers like "when I do not have breast cancer." At the time, I felt that cancer had not only robbed me of my health, but of my humor, my beauty, my spirit and the wonderful life I had known. For some reason "Divine inter-



Living Life to Its Fullest

by Maryann LaMaina

I have always considered myself a lucky person. I have been so lucky to be married to my high school sweetheart, Tom, for 41 years. We have been blessed with two wonderful children, Jennifer and Tom, a great son-in-law and two adorable grandsons who are the loves of our lives. I'm fortunate to have my two parents who have been married for 66 years, my mother-in-law, my sister and brother and their families who all live close to us in southern New Jersey.

In the summer of 2010, however, my life hit a bump in the road. We were on a trip to Charleston, South Carolina when I began to not feel very well. I was lethargic, had no appetite, and was losing weight rapidly. When we returned home, I scheduled a colonoscopy to discover I had a mass on my colon and heard those three terrifying words for

the first time: "You have cancer."

My first instinct was to meet with my family and to research the disease as well as health care facilities where I could get the best care possible. In August, we scheduled an appointment with Dr. Mark Pello, who is a gastrointestinal surgeon at Cooper, to discuss my treatment options. Dr. Pello informed me that an immediate surgery on my colon was necessary. We also knew from a CAT-scan that the tumors had spread to my liver. At this time, I was still working as a full-time special education teacher with autistic children, so I thought it would be important to set up my classroom for the new school year before my surgery, never realizing it would be my last time in the classroom. I have since retired. My class of children always made me feel lucky to see their happy faces and it reminded me of how they always tried their best. It was difficult to come to the

realization that I needed to help myself right away if I was going to fight this disease, but I think in a small part they inspired me to try my hardest.

My surgery was successful, but it confirmed that I had stage IV metastatic colon cancer and that I would need to start chemotherapy in six weeks. Everything happened so quickly that I really had no time to dwell on it. I was so lucky to have the support of all my family and friends to keep me smiling and laughing.

After I recovered from surgery, I met with my oncologist at Cooper Cancer Institute, Dr. Alex Hageboutros, and his entire team, and my family and I immediately loved them and felt so confident being in their care. A few days before I started chemotherapy, my daughter gave me an inspirational frame by Ralph Waldo Emerson which says "What lies behind us, and what lies before us, are tiny matters compared to what lies within us," which I still keep next to my bed.





vention," perhaps I decided to meet Dave on a weekly basis with the hope of him helping me find a way to pick myself up off the floor and climb out of the depths of despair. Our first couple of sessions I sat mostly numb and cried while Dave taught me about meditation and mindful thinking. I remember telling him that I wondered if I would ever be happy again. Although there were times when I didn't want to get out of bed and get myself to that appointment, I quickly began to realize that I always (always!) left our therapy session feeling better. After nearly thirty Monday mornings spent with Dave, I am armed

with the "tools" necessary to endure this difficult journey. He has taught me an entirely different way of thinking and about the power of being present and positive. I truly believe I am a different person, well; maybe I'm the same person with a profoundly different outlook on life. I no longer look at the glass half empty, but look to fill it with a Stella and down it while sitting on the beach, basking in the sun and drenched from the waves. On February 20, 2013, exactly seven months after my diagnosis, I was able to tell Dave that I am "cancer free" after my post-operative pathology report determined that my tumor and lymph nodes had a pathological complete response to the chemotherapy drugs. While my family, friends and doctors celebrated the news, I quietly wondered how I could ever repay those who helped me win this battle. I decided my payment would be to pay it forward, to help someone who is where I was seven months ago. I

wished aloud to Dave that I could walk through the infusion room and politely beg those being treated to utilize the services of the behavioral team at Cooper. So, this is my walk through the infusion room. I would not be where I am today (mentally and physically) were it not for the benefit of having met Dave Moore during my darkest days. I have taken back my health, my humor, my spirit (and some say my looks!) with his help and all that he has taught me. I will be forever grateful to have had him on my team and for the opportunity to take advantage of Cooper's integrated approach to my treatment. Together, we kicked cancer's ass.

If you are interested in Behavioral Medicine Services please feel free to contact either Dr. Cori McMahon directly at 856.673.4264 or call the clinical service line at 856.673.4254.

I have been coming to Cooper Cancer Institute in Voorhees now for two and a half years, every other week, and it has been a great experience. The oncology infusion nurses and staff are the most compassionate, dedicated and hardworking individuals I have ever met. They have made my journey so much easier by always being comforting and encouraging. I am so lucky to have them as part of my care. In addition, my husband and I look forward to seeing all of our friends at chemotherapy on my "chemo weeks." We have made such special friendships that we try to all sit together and support each other, compare stories and just laugh. The first week, we met Bonnie Mehr and her Tea Cart



Tom and Maryann LaMaina

through the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program, and were delighted by her treats and her happy welcoming face. What a wonderful way to treat the chemo patients! In the beginning of chemotherapy, I couldn't eat the treats, but

Tom loved them. Now my appetite is back to normal and it is fun to see what is on the cart each week.

I have been so lucky to tolerate the different chemotherapy drugs so well so far. I've had to have a few changes in my chemotherapy the past two and a half years, but I have worked through it with the excellent care by my doctors and support of my friends and family.

My friends always commented to Tom and I before I was diagnosed with cancer that we lived life to the fullest. We loved traveling with our family, summers down the shore, date night Saturday and day trips every Sunday along with all our other social engagements. I've come to realize that I can still live life to the fullest on those "non-chemo weeks."

Those days are full of meeting family and friends for lunch and dinner, shopping, spending time with my grandsons and overnights at bed and breakfasts. I love keeping in touch with my fellow teacher friends and family on Facebook. My family and friends have been so supportive and helpful in this new phase of my life.

I once read years ago that: "Yesterday is a memory, Today is a present and Tomorrow is a gift." And now, even living with cancer and going through this journey, I have learned that I can still appreciate that present every single day.



About The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program

The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program enhances the quality of life and wellness of individuals touched by cancer – including patients, their caregivers and family.

It utilizes therapies that focus on mind, body and spirit while supporting mainstream medical care. The complementary therapies offered through CCI are designed to lessen the pain, stress and anxiety associated with cancer. Therapies also assist in managing the side effects of traditional treatments such as radiation and chemo-therapy. While complementary therapies cannot cure cancer, many patients have found them to be helpful in managing and coping with their cancer. While traditional medicine and healthcare treat the illness, complementary medicine therapies help promote wellness in the whole person.

In addition to the therapeutic benefits, taking part in complementary medicine therapies empowers participants – providing survivors with an opportunity to take a positive, active role in their care and treatment.

All therapies and programs offered through the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program are available at no cost and are open to all cancer patients and their caregivers, regardless of where they receive their treatment. These programs, lectures and activities offer patients access to social, educational and support opportunities. Programs are offered weekly throughout the year. Our outpatient complementary medicine programs include:

- Restorative Yoga
- Therapeutic Chair Massage
- Meditation for Relaxation
- Qi Gong
- Body Movement Classes
- Behavioral Health Workshops
- Creative Arts
- The Tea Cart (brought to outpatients while receiving chemotherapy)
- Educational Seminars
- Horticultural Therapy

This program is wholly funded through philanthropic support. As the reputation and demand for our programs and services grow, so does our need for funding. If you are interested in learning more about The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program or would like to make a donation, please contact, Bonnie Mehr, Program Manager, at 856.325.6646.

Supermodel for Hope

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shows say they're just going "to have fun with it," I always thought how can you be so calm in front of all those people, I'd be a nervous wreck. I hate public speaking but my alter ego took over when I was introduced and I sashayed up the aisle dipping and pivoting, waving to my friends and son, and becoming one with the supermodel gown.

I was then able to say a few words to the audience about my cancer and how the beatlivercancers.org group and its founder helped me with information and support for the next phase of my treatment. The best part was meeting all the women like me who had come from near and far to say thank you and give others hope. (And I got to keep the gown!)

When we are feeling down from cancer, we never know what good fortune may await us around the corner. After getting bad news that my chemo was no longer working, I received a very uplifting phone call from Burlington County that the Freeholders

planned to create a new Courage Award for my cancer fight and volunteer efforts. That was a big morale booster when I needed it and a shiny silver lining to my black cloud.

It also gave me something to look forward to as I invited friends, family and former co-workers to the presentation. I am fortunate to have a great support network and had about 60 people attend the happy occasion. One friend said, "If love could cure cancer, you would be the healthiest woman in the world!"

I have been writing about my experiences since my diagnosis over three years ago, so, writing my thank you remarks came easy. I used to dislike public speaking but have become courageous and wiser in many ways including no longer being self-conscious about speaking, especially when I can help others.

After talking from my heart, I received a standing ovation, which was a very heartwarming moment that I will always remember. The best part is that the award will be given annually in my name to others leaving a lasting proud legacy for my family.



Loretta O'Donnell recently celebrated receiving a Courage Award with her son Mike, husband Bill and daughter Laura. A stage 4 colon cancer patient since 2010, she received the award for her continuing battle and volunteer work from Burlington County Freeholder Director Joe Donnelly (pictured at right). The plaque reads "Who, in the face of adversity, has demonstrated extraordinary strength of character, has emerged as an outstanding role model for others, and has touched and inspired us all." The award will be given annually in her name.





From left to right: Lorelei McGlade, Alishia Wrubleski, Judith Marquez, Dr. Cori McMahon, Evelyn Robles, Dr. Generosa Grana, Ramona Sanabria.

Breast Cancer & Sexuality

by Judith Marquez

My experience at the 2013 Latino Komen Conference was indescribable. As a young Latina breast cancer survivor I felt more than privileged to share the sexuality issues I faced during my battle with breast cancer. As I looked out to the hundreds of Latin women in the audience, I knew then that all I had been through had not been for that of myself but that of other young women who might possibly have similar experiences. I was nervous to share such intimate details but this experience was no longer that of my own but one of life's situations that happen for a greater purpose. This purpose is to empower women to be comfortable in their own skin regardless of the opinion of others. Sexual intercourse during breast cancer stripped me from any and all that made me feel like a woman. My partner at the time was so uncomfortable being intimate during my experience with breast cancer that I was subjected to having sex with my wig on. After feeling as though I needed to hide behind a wig, I removed myself from that situation altogether and focused on the beauty within and not the acceptance of a man. I shared this eye-opening experience to display to women; young women in particular that self worth is key in confidence. As women we must learn to in-

still these principals in ourselves. The silence that filled the room as the words flowed from my mouth displayed the impact my experience had on the women in the crowd. I was a young 25 year old during my experience so I was

still trying to figure out who I was and my place in this diverse world. Young teenage girls gathered after the event to ask me questions and take photos. Speaking at this event made me realize that young women are well aware of the sexual issues that could possible occur during breast cancer, but now will be a bit more prepared. Now, 5 years later at the age of 30 I will always be able to look back and relate to young women who are caught in the same situation. I have no problem sharing my story with anyone willing to listen and learn from my mistakes. After this experience I have become an even more confident woman regardless of all the imperfections breast cancer has left behind. Today, young women are often judged on their physical appearance. I hope to be a representation of young breast cancer survivors living life to the fullest with the acceptance of life's changes. This experience helped turn me into the woman I am today and I would never change a thing. I am proud to be a young Puerto Rican breast cancer survivor.

Life Goes On...

by Teresa Kao

Many cancer survivors think that cancer is the best thing that happened to them. Many also think that cancer made them a better person. When I was first diagnosed with cancer, I'd get upset and feel guilty when I read or heard these sentiments because I couldn't relate to them at all. But now some eight years later, I can appreciate these sentiments much more. Even though I can't say that cancer is the best thing that happened to me or that cancer made me a better person, I do feel that my cancer journey has given me some new perspectives and insights. I recently went on a trip with some friends. After we got home, my friends told me that I seemed to enjoy the trip the most. I think it's probably because I've learned to live in the present moment with a beginner's mind. In doing so, I



Teresa and grandson, Oliver.

find enjoyment even in simple and mundane experiences.

When I was done with my chemo treatment in the summer of 2005, Dr. Grana suggested that I attend the Live & Learn lectures offered by the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program at Cooper Cancer Institute. She felt that I'd benefit from the lectures and get additional support. Her suggestion turned out to be one of the best pieces of advice I've ever received. For the next several years, I participated in all the classes that

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The Diagnose, the Process, the Promise

by Tanya Tuten

I came from a family who was strong in faith and in the power of prayer. I remember in 1997 frequently seeing my Grandmother lying across her bed praying when she was receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer. My grandmother was a strong woman of faith who talked to God about any and everything. In 1998, I went from being raised in knowing who God was, to me having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for myself.

My faith in God grew in such a way that I believed what the Word of God said whole-heartedly. Since then, my life has been driven by my faith, and prayer wrapped in the power and grace of God.

On August 23, 2011 there was an earthquake that shook the East Coast and that wasn't the only thing that I felt shake that day. I received a phone call stating that I tested positive for triple negative breast cancer; and a week later I was told that I was stage IV and it had spread to the liver. I was hurt and confused because I just knew in my heart that my purpose in life wasn't fulfilled yet. I called my Mom and gave her the news that I had received and we did what we knew to do and that was to PRAY. There was a peace that came over me and even though my situation didn't look good I was quick to remember that, I walk by faith and not by sight. I knew from that point that there was a process that I would be required to go through and it wasn't going to be easy but God's grace would be sufficient. God was with me and he was fully in control. My husband, children and I all stood on the scripture, "I Shall Live and not die to declare the works of the Lord." I started chemotherapy September 2011 and my first PET scan after I started chemo was in December. The PET scan didn't show any cancer in the breast or the liver and every scan I've had up to date hasn't shown any evidence of cancer. God is Amazing!

My mother has been my #1 support



Tanya and her mother, Robin.

I shall live and not die to declare the works of the LORD. *Psalm 118:17*

person and my personal nurse. She has never missed a doctor's appointment, a chemo treatment, any procedures or intercession on my behalf. During chemo treatment she makes sure I'm comfortable with a pillow and blanket and sits there patiently until I'm done. A year after my diagnosis my Mom went from sitting next to me while I was getting treatment to sitting in her own chair receiving her own infusion along side of me. In 1997 my mom treated for stage 1 breast cancer and underwent a lumpectomy, chemo, and

radiation because of our family history. Now, 15 years later my Mom was diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer in the opposite breast and had spread to the liver and abdomen. My Mom has always had my back but now we are back to back supporting one another in the good fight of faith! We both are being treated at Cooper Cancer Institute in Voorhees, NJ. Dr. Marjan Koch is our oncologist and my mom and I both love the compassion and dedication Dr. Koch has show to us and

our families at such a difficult time in our lives. The nurses in the infusion center Rock! My nurse is Lori and my Mom's nurse is Meg and we are always in competition to see who will finish first. We laugh and joke around and at times have been referred to as double trouble while walking to our seats. The entire staff has truly been heaven sent and we wouldn't rather be anywhere else.

Many things have changed for us over the last 18 months; but there is one thing that has never changed and that is our faith in God to do exceeding and abundantly above what we can ask or think... we have defied expectations based on our diagnosis.

We will continue to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!



Emily Moy and Sydney Cohen of Voorhees generously donate a \$115.00 Shop Rite gift card to The Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Tea Cart that supplies baked goods and refreshments five days a week at our Voorhees chemo infusion sites. These local teen "heroes" decided to sell their outgrown clothing and books to raise the money. Their goal was make a positive difference in their local community for cancer patients.

For more information please contact Bonnie Mehr, Manager, the Dr. Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program at 856.325.6646 or mehr-bonnie@cooperhealth.edu. You may mail your ShopRite gift card donations to: Attn: Bonnie Mehr, Cooper Cancer Institute, 2017 Piazza Main Street, Voorhees, NJ 08043.



A Story of Hope and Inspiration

by Amy Link

I always knew I would get breast cancer. For me, the question wasn't if, it was when. When I was eight years old, I watched my mother lose her battle with breast cancer at age 33; my maternal grandmother had died 2 years earlier of the disease when she was in her 50s.

In September 2006, my question was answered. I was a wife and mother of 2 young children, Grayson Rose who was 5 and Wheaton Alexander who was 2. I found a lump on my right breast and another under my right arm.

The next six weeks involved meeting with a Cooper genetics counselor (Dana Farengo-Clark), had genetic testing, underwent a mammogram, ultrasound and lumpectomy, and ultimately received the expected diagnosis of breast cancer. I had been seeing a surgical oncologist since my early 20s from Kennedy hospital (Dr. Richard Liscewski) as a preventative measure since I knew my destiny. He was a blessing who also recommended Dr. Generosa Grana. Because of him, I was put into the gifted hands of Dr. Grana and the Cooper Cancer Institute oncology department.

As soon as I knew it was cancer I said, 'take them off. I don't need them anymore.' I had already breast fed both my children so they have served their purpose. After the operation, the genetic test results came back, confirming that I had a mutation in my genes that significantly increased my chances of developing breast and ovarian cancers.

After a double mastectomy, I went through chemotherapy, radiation and breast reconstruction, and a year later, I decided to have my ovaries removed because of my gene mutation. I didn't see my cancer diagnosis as a death sentence. I just considered it a bump in the road of life. Everyone

faces their own set of challenges - this was mine.

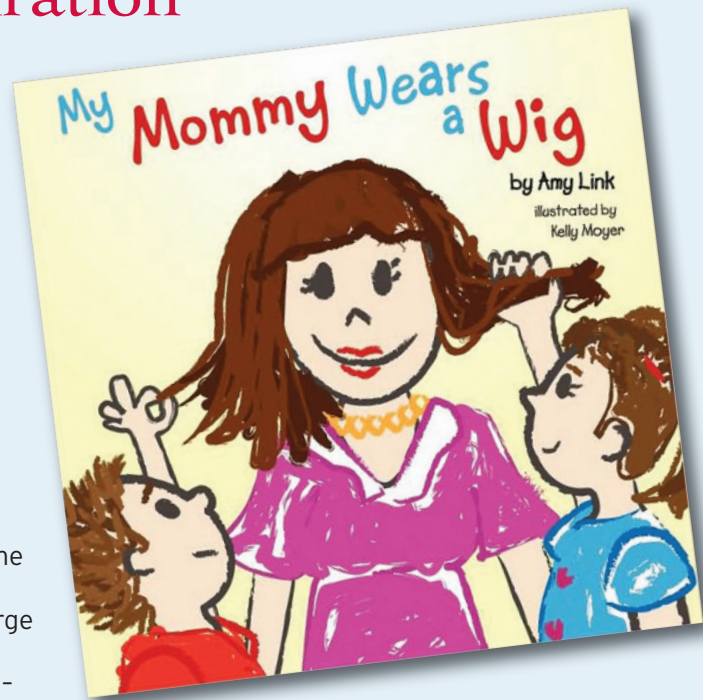
I believe 'there's always a positive from a negative'. I believe my cancer diagnosis came at the right time in my life when I was able to face it head on with a positive attitude. I further believe that God did not give me the cancer; he cried with me the day I found out and then he gave me the strength I needed to charge ahead. I didn't have bad days - just bad hours but doesn't everyone?!



Honestly, I looked forward to the days in the chemo room. The staff made me feel like a queen

as I sat wrapped in a warm blanket, feet up, personal TV (without having to watch cartoons) and wonderful conversation with nurses, doctors, counselors, visitors and other patients. They were the people with whom I shared my joy, thoughts, tears, jokes and prayers; since my husband and I had decided from the beginning not to tell anyone but close family. We wanted to keep life as normal as possible for the children without having them hear of others talking about cancer and not truly understanding it.

During this time, I wrote a book called *My Mommy Wears a Wig*. I heard of so many people in the chemo room expressing how difficult it was to discuss hair loss especially with children. So, my book talks about my experience with my then 5 year old daughter. I made it into something fun, something to mark the beginning of getting 'rid of the bad stuff in my body' in order to get better. The story is told from a child's point of view and includes talking about the disease, wig shopping and then wearing the



wig. It has lighthearted humor and laughter while presenting its topic in a child friendly way.

I often tell people about a lady who saw me in church and asked who did my hair (which was really my wig). I told her that a friend of many years recently gave me a new style (and she truly did but she's the one that cut all my hair off). The lady had walked away but came back and asked if she thought my friend would do her hair. I smiled and kindly responded that she works from home only working for established clients. She turned but came back to me a 3rd time and said she would pay anything to get the same cut and coloring as I had. My only thought was, 'wow, how bad was my hair before this!?'

I am now a 6+ year survivor and elementary education teacher while continuing to be a wife and business partner with my husband, Jeff, and mother of now 11 year old daughter and 9 year old son. I now happily spend my time at my daughter's dance competitions and horse shows, my son's soccer and baseball games, teaching religious education, cub scouts & 4-H and just spending time together as a family.

You can find my book at:
www.authorhouse.com and
www.barnesandnoble.com



As a cancer survivor I learned to listen to my intuition and investigate symptoms and this has transferred over into all aspects of my life. Therefore, when I smelled an odor, I smelled an odor... and I was going to leave no stone unturned until I got to the bottom of it...

The saga began one night in the middle of January. I awoke sometime around 4 a.m. and smelled an odd odor in my bedroom. Thinking it was the humidifier that I ran every night, I turned it off saying to myself I'll clean it out and change the filters in the morning. I went back to sleep. But the odor persisted the next night. It got worse over the week end and I asked some friends who were visiting on Sunday if they could detect any unusual odors but the answer was no. It smelled like exhaust fumes to me. I slept with the windows open even though the temp was about 20 degrees.

You can imagine my surprise when I had the heater man check the furnace

first thing Monday morning and it was OK. I was sure the culprit was the furnace since I was smelling the odor throughout the house. (He couldn't smell anything.) Now what? I smelled the odor off and on for the rest of the week and then on Saturday it got worse. I called the gas company who determined it wasn't a gas leak and suggested I call the Fire Department. I was stunned – Call the Fire Department? I had visions of sirens screaming and the neighborhood in an uproar. I wasn't that desperate yet.

I went to bed that night and then was afraid to go to sleep so I called the Fire Department – no sirens but flashing lights. Two very nice firemen responded in full regalia and came in with a meter to check for gas and Co2 but everything was negative. Plus they couldn't smell anything. I was really frustrated by this time and was starting to think I must be in the Twilight Zone. The fireman gave me a virtual pat on the back (think John Wayne in one of his Westerns saying "There, there, little lady") and told me to get some sleep as there was nothing harmful in my home. HA!

I consulted the manager of my complex who obligingly found out none of my adjoining neighbors were having any problems with unusual odors. By this time, I was beside myself, fearing for my safety and that of my cat. We were breathing in fumes and nobody (including a lot of experts) could tell me what the problem was.

I was sure by this time that everybody thought I was imagining things.

The odor seemed to be worse in the evening and at night so my upstairs neighbor (a fellow senior citizen and cancer survivor who had been very supportive) told me to call her when I smelled the odor and she would come right down no matter what time it was. I called her around 11 p.m. and at first she couldn't smell anything and then there we were standing in my kitchen at midnight wondering what in the world it could be and she said the magic words "I'm starting to smell the exhaust odor and your refrigerator hasn't stopped running since I've been here." Eureka! All the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. I had started to suspect the refrigerator but it was still keeping the food cold even though it was 20 years old but apparently it had been running almost all night unbeknownst to me. Also I had received an unusually high electric bill a few days previously. I then removed the food and pulled the plug and NO MORE ODOR. What a relief! My cat & I had been inhaling exhaust fumes for 2 weeks and I was grateful we had not been harmed.

There was a happy ending. I went out shopping the next day and bought a new refrigerator which was delivered and set up the following day. I was so grateful to my neighbor for helping me solve the puzzle. I gave her a big hug, took her out to breakfast and praised my inner voice and intuition!

Life Goes On...

(continued from page 7)

were offered. In addition to Live & Learn, I also went to Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Restorative Yoga, Qi-Gong, Gentle Stretching, Mindfulness Meditation, Guided Imagery Meditation and Cooking classes. I also went to Bonnie's book club and lectures on nutrition, aroma therapy, feng-shui, etc. These classes have introduced me to many new concepts and ideas, and have broadened my mind. I've learned many tools to deal with anger, fear, stress and the turmoil in my life. I'm more cognizant of the body, mind and spirit connection and the benefit of mindfulness. I've also made friends with many fellow survivors. Their spirits, strength and courage are inspiration to me. We have this camaraderie because of our shared cancer experiences.

Life goes on whether we're in active treatment or in remission... But friendship and shared good news always brighten our days.

Mango Peach Salsa

Ingredients:

- 1 mango, peeled and diced
- 1/2 cup peeled, diced cucumber
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped jalapeno
- 1/3 cup diced red onion
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1/3 cup roughly chopped cilantro leaves
- Salt and pepper

Directions:

Combine the mango, cucumber, jalapeno, red onion, lime juice and cilantro leaves and mix well. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.



From the Desk of:
Alicia Michaux MS, RD, CSO
Expert Oncology Nutritionist
Cooper Cancer Institute

