

Health Care

The search for a breast cancer cure continues:

National Denim Day gets everyone into the fight

There's nothing like a battle with cancer to make you realize what is important in life.

That's how Mary Lou Foreman (inset) feels today after being diagnosed with breast cancer nearly two years ago. The 46-year-old Georgetown woman, who works in the composing department at *The Independent & Free Press*, said many things that used to cause her stress before her cancer, seem inconsequential today.

She has also become involved in fund-raising activities for cancer research, including co-ordinating at her office National Denim Day Tuesday, May 13.

Participants make a suggested donation of \$5, and wear denim and a pink ribbon that day. This is the seventh year for the employee participation event put on by the Cure Foundation, which last year raised \$1.5 million for breast cancer research.

Companies, both big and small, interested in participating should call 1-888-592-CURE to have a kit couriered to them.

"It's something everyone can do at work. It's not a lot of money," said Foreman, who will also be walking in the Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life in June.

Foreman was told she had cancer after noticing dimpled skin on her breast.

Originally her doctor believed her tumor was 2.5 cm, but surgery done about a week later revealed it was

much larger — 5.5 cm.

The lump was removed along with her lymph nodes.

After the surgery Foreman said she and her family waited and prayed for two weeks to hear if the cancer had spread to her nodes.

"You just hope, because if it's in the nodes it's not a good thing."

Two weeks later she got good news, and bad news. The nodes were cancer-free but a second surgery was required because there was not yet a sufficient margin of clear tissue surrounding the location of the lump.

The second surgery, done soon afterward, was a success, but Foreman did get an infection that complicated her recovery and required regular visits by VON nurses.

Six sessions of chemotherapy followed. Foreman said she was fortunate

that she didn't feel sick from the chemotherapy but was tired, and lost her hair.

She admits that losing her hair was one of the hardest things she faced during her treatment.

"It's hard to look in the mirror and see yourself with no eyebrows and no hair. It's a reminder to you constantly, 24 hours a day, that you're ill. It's a reminder to other people that you're ill," she said.

She took part however in the Look Good...Feel Better program, which was very helpful. The free program helps women offset appearance-related changes from cancer treatment. Foreman's chemotherapy was followed by six weeks of five-day a week radiation treatment in Hamilton.

She said she was also tired throughout the radiation and

ended up with a nasty radiation burn, but adds there were many who had it a lot worse than she did.

"I got off fairly lucky," said Foreman, who stressed the importance of remaining positive throughout her treatment.

Today, Foreman, who is cancer-free, said she feels great. She does everything she can to stay healthy—she eats right and exercises regularly.

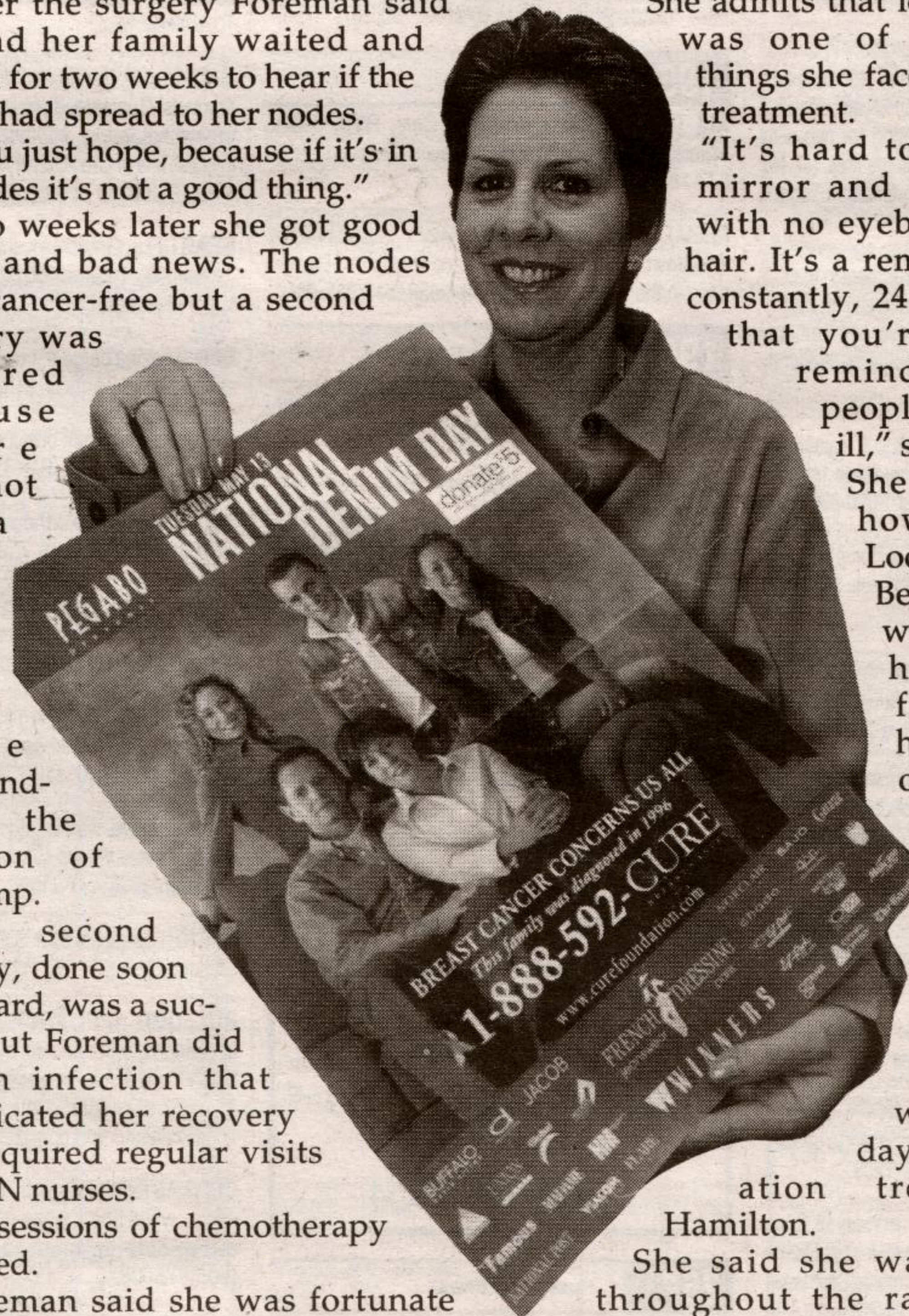
She also has regular mammograms and while there had been no history of breast cancer in her family before, now that there is, her two sisters are more vigilant about doing breast self-examinations and having regular mammograms.

Foreman said she doesn't dwell on her cancer today, but admits, "it's always in the back of your mind."

She would like to see a cure for the disease, and hopes that everyone participates in National Denim Day.

Individuals and small companies who do not want to call for a kit, can participate in the event and drop their donation cheque or money order made out to The Cure Foundation at *The Independent & Free Press* office, at 280 Guelph St. (Georgetown Marketplace) Unit 29. Those donations will be forwarded to the foundation by the newspaper. For more information on National Denim Day visit www.curefoundation.com.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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