

CANCER AWARENESS MONTH.

from our community



My Inner Strength By Joy Lapine

On February 14, 2007, I was feeling romantic as most of us do on Valentines Day. There I was getting ready for what I hoped to be a fabulous evening, putting on my make up and my favorite push up bra, when I noticed a lump. It felt a bit sore so I thought maybe when the dog jumped up to greet me she bruised my breast or maybe I had a clogged duct. I wasn't too concerned and thought up some pretty good reasons as to why I had that mysterious lump. A few weeks had past and I decided to have it checked out. My doctor requested that I go to have an ultrasound test on my breast. The Georgetown Hospital had me booked within two weeks but me and my infinite wisdom thought I could postpone my appointment not once but twice due to work and other stupid excuses I could think of. Finally I booked the appointment for April 27, 2007. This date was it for me: no more worrying about it, I had to just do it! That Easter I was visiting my family and my dear mother was battling a horrible cold. Before I left that night, she had promised me she would go to the doctor. My mother passed away from bone cancer on April 26, 2007.

I promised myself that I would not miss my appointment so I went to the hospital to have my test done even though I was emotionally drained. As they did the ultrasound the technician mentioned something about a mammogram. So they did the dreaded "breast press" and as I was waiting for the technician to make sure everything was fine, she mentioned to me that the doctor may want to do a biopsy. Sure enough, they send me to another room where the doctor informs me of the procedure for the biopsy. I found it ironic that one of my good friends was going for a scheduled biopsy after months of tests in Toronto and here I was just going for a little ultrasound and it transformed into a biopsy within an hour. Georgetown Hospital, in my opinion, were not only professional and accurate, the staff did their job with passion and concern for the patient. I owe them so much!

In June of 2007 I had my breast removed at the Milton hospital. I had some of my lymph nodes removed and they were tested for cancer. I was one of the lucky ones: I did not have chemotherapy but I am on Tamoxifen for another four years.

There are good days and then there are other days. There are the times when I feel inadequate. Really bad days are the ones that I forget my work badge and prothesis at home and end up wearing my coat all day because I don't want to make others feel uncomfortable. Or being careless with my prothesis and seeing my dog run by with it in his mouth. Even though cancer is a big part of our lives we cannot let it rule us. This past year and half has been such a life altering experience and I

could not have done it without the strength of my family, friends and loved ones. Be aware and enjoy life.

Just this past September I completed the Weekend To End Breast Cancer a 60km walk through Toronto and the CIBC Run For The Cure, and I plan to do it all again.

I can not express the importance of educating yourself about this disease. Know your body! Don't make the guess yourself, leave that to the professionals. Don't feel foolish about asking the questions: that's how we learn and survive.

**As you see the sea of pink
Scepticism will diminish
You will know the survivors
You know we are beating it**

Believe

Life will return to normal By Mary Lou Foreman

"I can tell my journey with breast cancer as can many other women (and men) but each story is different: diagnoses, treatments, outcomes - every one with a different ending. But having fought breast cancer I can tell you it's a long road, one that at times will be very frightening and lonely. But remember to let family and friends take that journey (or at least part of it) side-by-side with you. Don't be afraid to show your emotions, let them see when you're upset, sad, scared, the times that you just can't seem to stop thinking about the disease and more importantly on the many, many good days when you just feel so positive knowing you will beat this cancer. As treatment progresses you will realize the cancer hasn't taken over your life - that you still have control, can have fun and laugh, can look at your bald head and think "shampooing is so much easier now". The main thing is focusing on the future - when treatment is no longer required, feeling well again, hair is growing in, the many appointments are dwindling and life is getting back to normal. I am a 7 year breast cancer survivor and even still today, it is something I think of at least once a day...but I don't dwell on it, I look at breast cancer just as a little detour in the road of life and I am one of the lucky ones who has found a different route to get around it.

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