

A Seminar, a Road Trip, and a Pink Ribbon Run & Walk -By Tracy Brown

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Regional survivors are everywhere! You can find them attending our evening educational seminars held throughout the region; participating in a supportive networking group; enrolling in a morning or evening Gentle Yoga program in a small town or city; volunteering at a Coalition outreach booth at a fair; or maybe even ... *eating ice cream with their husband at a popular farm stand along Route 36!*

You know where else you'll find regional survivors? At Coalition events like the Annual Advanced Breast Cancer Seminar held every spring in Rochester. You'll find them running or walking with their friends and families at our exciting Pink Ribbon Run and Walk held annually on Mother's Day at the Genesee Valley Park. (It's a spectacular event!) You'll also see them on a bus early in the morning "road-tripping" to Albany to talk with New York State legislators about the importance of the Coalition's regional programs and activities.

That's where we have seen our regional survivors in the past few months – learning, participating, and advocating. These women, men, and their families are showing up and helping each other as they come together to support the Coalition's work. To our regional survivor community of breast cancer and gynecologic cancer survivors, we say THANK YOU! To our regional supporters and community stakeholders who welcome us, we say THANK YOU! To our New York State legislators who listen to us, support our regional work, and advocate for survivors, we say THANK YOU!

We could not do our work for THEM without YOU. ☺

Regional Breast Cancer Survivors: We need YOUR help! Would you like to learn more about becoming a volunteer? We'd love to hear from you!

Contact Tracy Brown directly at tracy@bccr.org or call 585-473-8177. Let's talk about the ways you can support the Coalition's work in your area.



Michelle Williams, Pamela Mulchay, Roberta Maxwell, and Cindy DeCarlo at the 2017 Pink Ribbon Run & Walk. Cindy, a steadfast supporter of the Coalition, is a member of the Regional Community Outreach Committee.



Coalition staff and members of the Regional Community Outreach and Advocacy Committees met with Senator Pamela Helming (NYS Senate District 54) during their visit to the State Capital.

A Q&A with Regional Yoga Instructor Deb Scodese French

We're pleased to feature a Q&A with Deb Scodese French, one of our regional yoga instructors. Deb has led the Coalition's Gentle Yoga classes in 5-week and 6-week sessions in Geneseo since fall 2016. We asked Deb to share some thoughts about her experience with survivors who enroll in these popular classes.

Who participates in Geneseo Gentle Yoga classes?

Any breast or gynecological cancer survivor can enroll in the Gentle Yoga sessions sponsored by the Coalition. It does not matter if you are currently going through treatment or if you are a 20-year survivor.* The class is designed to benefit all!

Can survivors enroll in Gentle Yoga even if they haven't taken a yoga class before?

You do not need any yoga experience to join the class. Gentle Yoga is designed to meet the needs of both "newbies" and veterans alike. New-to-yoga survivors are encouraged to enroll. This is a practice that focuses on breath, relaxation, awareness, connection, flexibility, personal strength, and self-esteem. You start where you are now, then grow and flourish from there.

What should Gentle Yoga program participants expect when they come to class?

When you come to class, you can expect a warm, welcoming, and safe environment with clear and positive guidance. You will experience time to center, breathing, movement, and time for stillness. There will be visual, verbal, and light hands-on assistance, as well as demonstrations and specific

modifications / props to assist in creating the best possible adaptation of the pose for your body. Fun is always incorporated into the class – participants have been known to break out into big smiles!

Can survivors participate in Gentle Yoga if they cannot get down to the floor and back up off the floor?

Yoga occurs wherever you are or wherever you let it. That means: standing, sitting, reclined, propped, or a combination of all. There is no one place, space, or position that you need to be in to benefit from the many positive effects of yoga.

Why should someone who has received a diagnosis of breast cancer or gynecologic cancer consider enrolling in a 6-week session of Gentle Yoga?

Receiving a diagnosis of breast or gynecological cancer can turn your world upside down! Yoga can help you rebuild your world and become more grounded. Physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, yoga helps to nurture, heal, and grow "you." Physically, yoga helps you to gain awareness of the physical changes in your body, what you can do to help relieve pain, soreness, restriction, and weakness, and how to rebuild your physical body in a safe, mindful manner. The positive emotional



effects are numerous as well. Yoga can improve focus, a more positive self-image, and bring a sense of calm and peacefulness amid all the chaos in your life. Socially, being in this Gentle Yoga class can help eliminate feeling isolated or alone. You are connected to others who are on a similar path. Connecting to your breath and calming your mind can help relieve stress and fear. Gentle Yoga gives survivors the opportunity and the tools to bring their life back into balance. There is much to gain!

* The Coalition recommends that individuals consult their physician before participating in any wellness program.

Learn more about Regional Gentle Yoga programs! We offer Gentle Yoga in several cities / towns outside of Monroe County. Contact the Coalition at 585-473-8177 or email Tracy Brown at tracy@bccr.org to learn what is available.

Coming Up!

Fourteenth Annual
★ Terri Schmitt
Legislative Reception

Wednesday, August 16, 2017
5:00-7:00PM
1048 University Avenue, Rochester, NY

Kindly call 585-473-8177 to RSVP
by Wednesday, August 9, 2017.

Breast Cancer Coalition
1048 University Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607
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Survivor Spotlight -By Tracy Brown



Cindy Sheflin – wife, mother of three sons, grandmother, and a women's health care professional living in Geneseo – invited us to her office one evening to talk about her journey following a diagnosis of endometrial cancer that began when she was out of town visiting family.

In March 2016, Cindy Sheflin was visiting her youngest son in Cleveland, Ohio. She and another son were delivering furniture and enjoying their visit. Without warning, Cindy began to experience heavy uterine bleeding. Even though she had some heavy menstrual cycles after giving birth to her three sons, this was unusual. In fact, she had been in menopause for a couple of years. Alarmed, Cindy and her family went to the Cleveland Clinic.

"I remember being scared because I had a maternal aunt in Switzerland who had suddenly hemorrhaged and died in surgery," Cindy admitted. The situation unfolding in Ohio that day hit close to home. "I was ten years old at the time when my mother received the letter telling us what had happened. All I could think about was my aunt."

The medical staff gave her two options: be admitted and undergo a complete workup, or be stabilized and return home. Cindy chose to return to New York. When she thinks back to that frightening day in Ohio, Cindy is grateful to her sons. "They stepped up to the plate, they took care of their mom, and got me home."

Cindy then scheduled an appointment with her physician in Rochester. "The doctor first performed an ultrasound," she said. "The next step was a D&C [dilation and curettage] and from that they made the diagnosis of endometrial cancer."

Following protocol, Cindy was referred to a gynecologic surgical-oncologist for surgery that would be scheduled a little over a month after her D&C.

"It was a more complicated case," Cindy explained. "After my last pregnancy, I had a prolapse of the uterus. It started out small, but had gotten worse over the years. I asked my surgical-oncologist if it could be repaired at the same time as my hysterectomy, and she referred me to a urogynecologist who would perform the second half of my surgery."

Cindy chuckled when she recalled her conversation with the urogynecologist. "She told me that she was an artist, that she would give me a new vagina!" Both of her surgeons, Cindy shared, were amazing.

We paused for a moment in our interview to talk about the strange conversations that can follow a diagnosis of cancer. "I think sometimes," Cindy said, "that if there are other things on your mind, don't be afraid to ask your doctor about them. Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself. I was able to get both surgeries done. They were able

to work it out for me."

The first part of surgery consisted of five little incisions through which Cindy's doctor removed several lymph nodes, her ovaries, and her uterus. The second half of the surgery focused on repair (bladder work, etc.). She went home the next day.

"I felt great as soon as the surgery was over," Cindy said. Her husband, Dick, is retired and was able to provide support. Friends were helpful, too. Working in women's health, Cindy appreciated the compassion she received from her co-workers.

At a follow-up appointment with her surgical-oncologist, she learned the results of her surgery. The cancer, which began in the uterus, had traveled to one ovary. Cindy's medical team recommended chemotherapy and radiation.

"I was never really fearful, even though you can imagine the worst. I knew it was treatable." With treatment, she noted, "you take it a step at a time."

Treatment included six rounds of chemo three weeks apart from June through September. Her surgical-oncologist was adamant that Cindy have "no side effects" and encouraged her to report anything negative. Cindy did have some constipation, but that was remedied with laxatives. She also lost her hair. Nausea was easily controlled with medication. All in all, treatment was not that bad for her. Cindy mentioned that she had opted out of having a port put in for her chemo treatments. "I think it was empowering for me to make my own choice, especially since everything can feel so out-of-control at that point." Cindy eventually went back to work during this time.



Cindy and family

She also enrolled in the Coalition's Gentle Yoga program offered in Geneseo and "loved it." She still attends class when it's offered.

"I guess that's the thing with cancer. First, you take stock of your life. Then, it opens doors such as the yoga, something I always wanted to do. It pushed me to do it." Cindy also talked about her interest in aromatherapy. Again, her diagnosis was part of a catalyst to pursue training in something that she wanted to learn more about – something that fueled her passion. She also noted that separately, her surgical-oncologist was involved in a study on essential oils as a complimentary therapy alongside treatment.

A scan in September was clear – no cancer. Cindy was then referred to a radiation oncologist. "Another wonderful doctor!" she told us. "He's phenomenal. He made me laugh." Radiation treatment began with a month of external pelvic radiation. "I think it ended up being 28 times through the New Year because of holiday interruptions."

A special internal radiation followed: three treatments, each a week apart. Moving forward, Cindy will alternate follow-up appointments between her surgical-oncologist and radiation oncologist for the next five years.

As our conversation began to wind down, we asked Cindy, "where are you now a year after diagnosis?"

She admits that she doesn't usually think about cancer.

"I'll go days and it won't even cross my mind. It's in the background now. I keep busy, I keep working. I have two granddaughters. I feel good. Life goes on," Cindy said. "I do have more compassion for people. I've noticed that people like to come up and talk to me. I'm glad to be able to listen." Cindy plans to join the Coalition's PALS (Peer Advocates Lending Support) Program as a peer mentor and will attend the next mentor training session in Rochester.

"Cancer can play a mind-game, because you do think of the worst. But then I'd ask myself, what am I moping about? I'm not going to die tonight. Get up and live your life."

We asked Cindy what she would say to someone who had just received a diagnosis of endometrial cancer; what would she like them to know in the moment?

"That's a tough one, because everyone's situation is so different. It is such a process. Like anything, you go into a shock. Looking back on it, I think I was in kind of a shock. My nursing background helped me keep a calm demeanor. I stayed calm for my family. You really fall back onto your faith. Whatever the situation, everything will be okay."

Cindy left us with this final piece of advice: "Take it a day at a time. Enjoy each day. Use humor every day." ☺

Note: Having shared her family history with her surgical-oncologist – especially the circumstances surrounding her aunt's death – Cindy was told after her surgery that her endometrial cancer did not show any genetic markers.



Cindy and granddaughters

**"Take it a day at a time.
Enjoy each day.
Use humor every day."**

What's Going On?

The Coalition brings free educational and supportive programming to select cities and towns across the region.

From evening educational seminars, to Gentle Yoga, to Mindfulness & Meditation classes, to support / network opportunities and more, the Coalition works to make programs available for our regional survivor community.

Do you want to know when we are holding an event or offering a program in your area? We can add you to our list!

Contact Tracy Brown, Regional Programs and Outreach Director, at 585-473-8177 or email her at tracy@bccr.org and request to be put on the regional notification list.



Regional survivor Nancy Miller with her daughter & granddaughters at the Pink Ribbon Run & Walk