

Breast Cancer Coalition **BCCR**

VOICES OF THE Finger Lakes Region of Central & Western New York



Dr. Makiko Ban-Hoefen speaks about the long term effects of chemotherapy at our Geneva educational seminar.

Full Steam Ahead!

It was a pleasure to wrap up 2016 by holding six regional evening educational seminars in six different cities, and by launching two more successful Gentle Yoga pilot programs - this time in Geneseo and in Geneva. We also piloted our first support networking group for breast cancer and gynecologic cancer survivors in Albion.

And now we're rolling into 2017!

We're building our calendar for the first half of the year, focusing on the feedback we've received from breast cancer and gynecologic cancer survivors. If you're new to the Coalition's regional work, we typically seek out speakers from the communities in which we have scheduled our educational seminars.

For example, if we want to engage a health provider to talk about reducing the risk of breast cancer recurrence, we would look to local cancer treatment centers to determine if there was an oncologist who could present on the topic. Our regional survivor community also provides us with excellent resources to learn more about their lymphedema experts,

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Shannon Chanler, a licensed oncology acupuncturist, and Deb French, a registered yoga trainer, discuss the benefits of complementary therapies at our Geneseo evening educational seminar.

Full Steam Ahead continued

yoga instructors, nutritionists, physicians, and more. These collaborative providers allow us to deliver our programs throughout the region.

As the New Year opens before us, we're reviewing different cities and towns that we would like to include in our repertoire for 2017. We want to reach more survivors and connect them to programs that can help. As we determine new spaces to build a supportive presence, we invite you to contact us to be added to our notification list. We want YOU to know in advance of what we are bringing to a city or town near you. Call 585-473-8177 or email tracy@bccr.org today.

We made visiting New York State Senators and Assembly Members throughout the region a priority in fall 2016. Our representatives were eager to learn about our regional outreach and how they could support us moving forward. We'd like to thank the following representatives for meeting with us to learn more about our regional work:

New York State Senators

Sen. Rich Funke (District 55); Sen. Patrick Gallivan (District 59); Sen. Thomas O'Mara (District 58); Sen. Robert Ortt (District 62); Sen. Michael Ranzenhofer (District 61); Sen. Joseph Robach (District 56); and Julie Schmidt, District Coordinator for Sen. Catharine Young (District 57).



Shelly Trim and Andrea Pearson, both from Noyes Health's Physical Therapy, are joined by Lymphedema Awareness Network facilitator Karen Miltner during the Q&A portion of our Dansville educational seminar.

New York State Assembly Members

Assemb. Harry Bronson (District 138); Elizabeth Huson, District Office Assistant for Assemb. David DiPietro (District 147); Assemb. Stephen Hawley (District 139); Assemb. Mark Johns (District 135); Assemb. Brian Kolb (District 131); Assemb. Peter Lawrence (District 134); Assemb. Joseph Morelle (District 136); Assemb. Bob Oaks (District 130); and Assemb. Philip Palmesano (District 132).

Note, due to scheduling conflicts, we were unable to meet with all of our representatives as planned, but will follow up with those offices in 2017. ☺

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Save the Date:

Saturday,
January 28,
2017



The next PALSSM (Peer Advocates Lending Support) training has been scheduled for breast cancer survivors who are ready to serve as mentors to those who are newly diagnosed. The training is free, and lunch will be provided. Please contact Pat Battaglia, Associate Program Director, at 585-473-8177 or pat@bccr.org for more details and to receive a PALSSM training application.

Get On Our List!

To learn about upcoming regional programs and seminars, send Tracy Brown your name, address, and email address today!

Email her at tracy@bccr.org or call 585-473-8177, ext. 310.

Survivor Spotlight -By Tracy Brown



Sue Cirencione — *The Coalition sat down with young survivor Sue Cirencione to talk about life a year and a half after receiving a diagnosis of breast cancer. Over coffee on a chilly autumn day in Geneva, NY, she shared her story.*

Sue Cirencione is an active woman with a penchant for getting involved in her community. Balancing a happy marriage and raising three beautiful daughters

while working full-time, Sue is one busy lady.

You could say that her breast cancer journey began before her diagnosis in early 2015. A former supervisor called her unexpectedly to tell her that one of the clerks in the office had been diagnosed with breast cancer. The woman “had no known risk factors,” and this made Sue feel uneasy. As far as she knew, she didn’t have any significant risk factors either. A little voice in her head told her: *go get checked.*

Sue was in her early forties. An occasional procrastinator, she was overdue for her annual mammogram. Plus, she noticed a lot of conflicting advice in the media about routine mammograms so she wavered. But the little voice in her head persisted: *you need to go.*

She listened and scheduled a routine mammogram. During the Friday appointment, the technician took an extra picture of her right breast, but didn’t indicate there could be a problem. But Sue “just knew it was breast cancer.” In church that Sunday, a song about needing strength was played. “It hit me,” she said. “The song was talking to me. I started to cry.”

The next morning, on the way to work, the same song played on the radio. Fifteen minutes later, she received a call: the radiologist wanted her to come back for additional pictures of her right breast. A biopsy followed. “The doctor was so kind,” Sue recalled. “But I scheduled the biopsy on a Friday, which meant I had to wait the whole weekend for the results.”

On Monday she waited all day, not realizing that calls about results weren’t made until after 5pm. “I’m a girls’ softball coach, and I had to go to practice,” she said. “I could

just see getting the call when I was with the girls.”

And that’s what happened – the call came when she was in the middle of a field. Sue had breast cancer. She tried to focus on what the doctor was saying, but could not. She finally asked, “can you just call my husband?” The doctor spent the next hour and a half explaining the diagnosis to Sue’s husband David and answering his questions.

Next was a consultation with a surgeon. Sue shared, “I have an auto-immune disorder, and I was worried about how cancer would affect me.” In particular, she was concerned about taking Tamoxifen for five years following surgery.

Sue was diagnosed with ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) in her right breast and, though she had many choices, she elected to have a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction. Treatment would not include chemotherapy or radiation, but Tamoxifen was recommended by her oncologist.

An endocrinologist confirmed that the drug could affect her thyroid. She opted to not take Tamoxifen, but chose to have her ovaries removed instead. Breast surgery

was scheduled several weeks out due to the surgeon’s schedule, and Sue and her family went on a planned Disney cruise. The brief normalcy was a relief.

“I have kind of a dark humor,” Sue added, sharing a vacation memory of holding up coconuts at the cruise buffet table and comparing them to breasts. Sue explained that she and her family became “Team 15” and pointed to the pink ribbon tattoo on the inside of her wrist. Her two eldest daughters have the same artwork.

On May 19, 2015, Sue had her bilateral mastectomy. Although originally cancer was only found in her right breast, the pathology of the left breast revealed cells that were starting to mutate. Her reconstruction experience would involve expander surgeries followed by implants.

Sue admitted that when she woke from surgery after getting the implants, she was disappointed. “I expected to



Sue’s daughters Maddie, Ashley, and Chelsie

Save the Date!

The Annual Cindy L. Dertinger Advanced Breast Cancer Seminar: Tools for the Journey will be held on Friday, April 7, 2017 at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester’s beautiful ArtWalk neighborhood.

Seminar
1:00-5:00pm

Reception
5:00-6:00pm



The panel of speakers will include members of the region’s medical community, as well as two survivors who are living with metastatic or stage IV breast cancer. A short reception follows the program.

These yearly seminars are typically held in March or April. Breast cancer survivors of all diagnoses, family members, friends, caregivers, and members of the medical community are welcome to attend. **RSVPs are required** so that we may plan appropriately. Please contact the Coalition for more information and to request to be added to our invitation list.

We hope you will be able to attend this or any of our other programs. Call the Coalition at 585-473-8177, or visit our website at www.bccr.org to learn more.

We hope to hear from you – and see you – soon.

Cancer Services Programs by County

Free breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screenings for women and men who have no insurance or are under-insured. (Age restrictions apply.)

Allegany & Cattaraugus Counties

Call: 585-593-4839

Chautauqua County

Call: 1-800-506-9185

Erie County

Call: 716-858-7376

Genesee & Orleans Counties

Call: 585-344-5497

Livingston & Wyoming Counties

Call: 585-786-8890 or
1-800-588-8670

Monroe County

Call: 585-224-3070

Niagara County

Call: 716-278-4898

Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, & Yates Counties

Call: 315-462-0602

Steuben County

Call: 877-778-6857 or
607-324-8811

wake up and look like Pamela Anderson. I wasn’t prepared. Things just didn’t look the same. It wasn’t what I thought it would be.” She had two additional reconstructive surgeries with the last one in August 2016.

Right now, Sue works full-time and holds down two part-time jobs. She’s a member of the Coalition’s Regional Community Outreach Committee (RCOC), and recently joined the board of her local United Way. “I made a promise that I would slow down,” she added wryly. She plans to pull back from another commitment to make some time for herself.

A former runner, Sue now sticks to walking for exercise. “There is work to be done,” she said. She recognizes that it’s easy to put off exercise, but that it’s important for her recovery. She hopes to enroll in the Coalition’s next Gentle Yoga session in Geneva.

Sue admitted she’s just now starting to process her breast cancer journey and starting to grieve. When she was actively going through her surgeries and recovering, she didn’t think about it too deeply. She joked and did not want to overwhelm her family. “But I’m realizing now that the last year and a half was tough. When I think about it, it did suck. But it’s important to talk about it, to grieve...and to begin to move on,” she said.

“I’ve gone through the physical healing, but the emotional healing is really just starting,” Sue finished. “I’m really going to make an effort to try and come to at least one Brown Bag Friday meeting [at the Coalition in Rochester] every month because I need to continue to talk.”

We’ll be here, Sue. And we’ll continue to listen.



Sue with husband David