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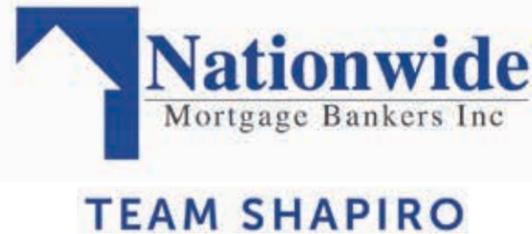
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Ancona's journey in the mortgage industry is nothing short of remarkable. Armed with a wealth of knowledge across Conventional, FHA, and VA loan programs, Francesco's expertise is unparalleled. His immersion in real estate transactions from a young age, alongside his father, laid the foundation for his exceptional understanding of the housing market.

Graduating magna cum laude from the University at Albany with a bachelor's degree in business management, Francesco's academic prowess is matched only by his dedication to his craft. Joining the esteemed team at Meadowbrook Financial Mortgage Bankers Corp., he swiftly established himself as an indispensable asset. What sets Francesco apart is his unwavering commitment to client service. From Montauk to Manhattan, he goes above and beyond, ensuring that clients receive personalized assistance tailored to their needs.

Francesco Ancona isn't just redefining mortgage mastery; he's setting a new standard for comprehensive, client-focused service in the New York market.



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Nicolo epitomizes the new wave of talent in the mortgage industry. Raised in an environment steeped in mortgage expertise, his family's legacy inspired his own journey into the field. Armed with a business degree from Molloy College, Gabe seamlessly integrated into the prestigious team at Meadowbrook Financial Mortgage Bankers Corp. upon graduation, which led to the ability to showcase his natural aptitude and dedication.

With a robust five-year tenure, Nicolo has become synonymous with excellence in client service, guiding numerous individuals towards their dreams of homeownership. His approach focuses on going above and beyond for clients, with clear communication and a strong effort to speed up the closing process. Recognizing the gravity of the financial decisions his clients face, Nicolo ensures they are well-informed every step of the way, providing clarity and reassurance.

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EVERY COLOR represents a fight, and every fight is a testament to strength. Cancer may come in many forms, but so does resilience.



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello October, the Season of Transformation!

As we enter October, the air turns crisp, and the leaves begin their colorful dance, painting the world in red, orange, and gold hues. There's a certain magic in the air, a sense of transformation and renewal as nature prepares for the quiet of winter.

October is a time for embracing change and celebrating the season's beauty. It's the month of cozy sweaters, warm drinks by the fire, and the excitement of Halloween. But it's also a time for introspection, a chance to reflect on the year so far, and to set intentions for the final months of 2024.

We're thrilled to announce our 2025 event schedule will be released soon!

Stay tuned for more details—there will be fantastic opportunities to connect, learn, and grow together.

As we journey through October, let's remember: "Autumn carries more gold in its pocket than all the other seasons." Here's to embracing the richness and beauty of this transformative time.

Wishing you all an October filled with warmth, reflection, and the magic of the season. Happy October, everyone!

KRISTIN BRINDLEY

Owner/Publisher

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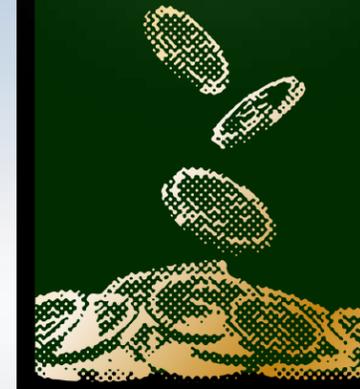
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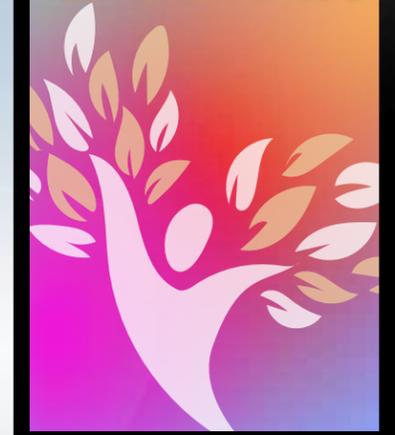
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THE HISTORY OF CANCER AWARENESS

A JOURNEY OF ADVOCACY AND PROGRESS

Cancer continues to be a significant health challenge in the United States, with the American Cancer Society projecting 2 million new cases and 611,720 deaths in 2024. Yet, as we reflect on the past 30 years, there is much to celebrate. Thanks to reduced smoking rates, advancements in early detection, and improved treatments, over 4 million lives have been saved since 1991.

Looking ahead, the increasing incidence of cancers like breast, pancreatic, and colorectal highlights ongoing challenges and the opportunity for continued progress. This evolving landscape underscores the importance of sustained awareness, innovation, and action in cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. By building on our hard-won achievements, we can continue to advance in the fight against cancer.

A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

Cancer awareness has become a cornerstone of the global effort to combat cancer. It serves as a crucial time for raising awareness, promoting early detection, and funding research for a disease that affects millions worldwide. What began as a focused effort on breast cancer awareness, celebrated every October, has expanded to embrace all forms of cancer. This evolution emphasizes the importance

of ongoing research, education, and support for those impacted by this disease.

The origins of Cancer Awareness Month trace back to 1985 when Breast Cancer Awareness Month (BCAM) was established through a collaboration between the American Cancer Society and Imperial Chemical Industries (now AstraZeneca). The goal was to encourage women to get mammograms for early detection—a life-saving measure that was not widely utilized at the time. Nancy Brinker, founder of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, played a pivotal role in BCAM's early days. Her foundation, named in honor of her sister who succumbed to breast cancer, has become a leading global force in the fight against breast cancer. The pink ribbon, introduced in 1991 by the Susan G. Komen Foundation, has since become a symbol of hope, solidarity, and the relentless pursuit of a cure.

EXPANDING THE EFFORT FOR GREATER IMPACT

While Breast Cancer Awareness Month gained significant traction, advocates for other cancers recognized the need for broader awareness. This led to the establishment of awareness months for various cancers such as lung, prostate, and colorectal cancers. These dedicated months and campaigns

highlight the power of focused awareness efforts and underscore the importance of early detection and research.

As the movement grew, it became clear that a unified effort could amplify the message of cancer prevention and research across all cancer types. Broader Cancer Awareness campaigns emerged, encompassing all forms of cancer. Organizations like the American Cancer Society have been instrumental in promoting awareness, supporting patients, and funding research.

FACING THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Cancer Awareness has made significant strides in changing the conversation around cancer. Increased public awareness has led to more regular screenings and healthier lifestyle choices, reducing cancer risk. Funds raised during awareness months have significantly advanced research, improving treatment and survival rates. For instance, early detection through screening programs has enhanced prognosis for many patients.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Cancer continues to be a leading cause of death worldwide, with disparities in healthcare access and socioeconomic factors impacting outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted cancer screenings and treatment, making continued advocacy and education more critical than ever. It has also highlighted vulnerabilities in our healthcare system, underscoring the need for robust public health strategies to ensure cancer care remains a priority.

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

The history of Cancer Awareness is a testament to the power of collective action in the fight against one of the world's most formidable diseases. From its origins as a focused breast cancer campaign, it has grown into a global movement that touches millions of lives. The success of Cancer Awareness demonstrates the impact that awareness, early detection, and research can have on improving outcomes for cancer patients.

As we move forward, the continued efforts to raise awareness, fund research, and support those affected by cancer are crucial. Together, we strive towards a future where cancer is no longer a death sentence but a disease that can be prevented, treated, and ultimately cured. With collective action, we bring ourselves closer to a world where cancer is faced with strength, courage, and a commitment to turning hope into reality.

special feature: cancer awareness

STRENGTH in

EVERY COLOR

Ribbons of All Hues There are over 50 ribbons representing different cancers and their survivors.

The Lavender ribbon, a symbol of awareness and support for all types of cancer, serves as a reminder of the importance of raising awareness.

 BRAIN	 BREAST	 COLON	 HEAD & NECK
 HODGKINS LYMPHOMA	 KIDNEY	 LEUKEMIA	 LIVER
 LUNG	 LYMPHOMA	 MELANOMA/SKIN	 OVARIAN
 PANCREATIC	 PROSTATE	 SARCOMA/BONE	 STOMACH

These ribbons represent just some of the many cancers and their survivors, each one a symbol of hope, unity, and the strength found in every color.

STRENGTH IN EVERY COLOR: STORIES OF CANCER SURVIVAL



▶▶▶ cancer awareness

ADRIENNE MCDUGAL

COMPASS

WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

I was diagnosed with lobular breast cancer, which is challenging to detect as it doesn't show up on mammograms or sonograms—only an MRI can find it. Initially, I was scheduled for a lumpectomy and a sentinel node biopsy. However, during surgery, they found that they couldn't remove all the visible cancer as it had spread throughout my breast, and the nodes appeared cancerous. As a result, they removed all nodes during surgery. After waking up, the doctor informed me that I needed a complete mastectomy. Due to the cancer in my nodes and the tumor's size, my cancer stage was either 2B or 3A.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS? WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

On December 11, 2003, just before my 42nd birthday, I received my cancer diagnosis. My house was filled with the laughter of my three children—ages 10, 8, and 5. It was a late Thursday afternoon, and each of my kids had a friend over after school. The kitchen phone rang, and I went upstairs to answer it due to the noise in the kitchen. The nurse said Dr. Scalfani wanted to speak with me. Sitting on my bed, Dr. Scalfani told me my core biopsy showed cancer. My heart sank. She scheduled an appointment for my husband and me to come in the next morning at 10. Numb, I called my husband at work and told him I had breast cancer and that I didn't know how to send the kids' friends home. He immediately left work to help. I couldn't believe I had

cancer; I was too young, and nothing was supposed to go wrong in my life. After the initial shock, I told myself I wasn't dying. I was determined to live, see my children grow up, and find the best doctors for my treatment.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

After my lumpectomy, I found out I needed a total mastectomy, and all the lymph nodes under my left arm had to be removed due to suspicion. I was devastated—I couldn't open my eyes in the hospital or on the ride home. I briefly sat with my children at dinner but went to bed right after. The next day, I woke up determined to fight cancer and keep things normal at home. I told my sister, who was wrapping Christmas presents for me, that I would find the best plastic surgeon and undergo whatever treatment was necessary to survive. My husband and two sisters were my greatest support, helping with the kids and keeping life as normal as possible during my chemo treatments.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

I underwent eight weeks of chemo with treatments every other week—four weeks on Adriamycin and Cytoxan, then four weeks on Taxol. The main side effects were mental fog and sluggishness, with the best feeling usually the day before each treatment. After Taxol, I'd have a burst of energy followed by a crash within 24 hours. Thankfully, I didn't experience nausea as anti-nausea meds worked well. I received Neulasta shots to boost my white blood cell count, which caused flu-like body aches.

Even after my mastectomy, I needed 30 radiation treatments because the cancer was near my chest wall. Radiation made me slightly tired. Since my cancer was estrogen-induced, I took Tamoxifen for five years and Femara for ten, both with minimal issues. I neglected calcium supplements and Fosamax for bone strength,

which led to a back fracture and an osteoporosis diagnosis ten years ago. I then had Reclast infusions and monthly shots for a year. Now, I lift weights twice a week, and my bone density has improved significantly.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

Most of my chemo side effects resembled those of pregnancy. I didn't experience many complications, given my good health at 42.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

Family and friends were crucial in my journey. My husband and sisters supported me by caring for my children when I felt unwell after treatment. Despite being full-time teachers in Rhode Island and New Jersey, my sisters took turns visiting on weekends, leaving their families to assist us. When they couldn't be there on weekdays, friends stepped in. I vividly remember a snowstorm before treatment, and I was worried it might be canceled. Even though schools were closed, MSKCC remained open. My neighbor, without hesitation, offered to watch my kids, even with their own children to care for. This was just one of many acts of kindness from those around me.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

The best advice is to listen. Sometimes, cancer patients just need someone to talk to. Keeping their mind off cancer and surrounding them with positive people is crucial. Avoid asking about prognosis or stage unless they bring it up. Respect their treatment choices and how they manage their situation. Instead of saying, "Call me if you need help," take proactive

steps. Ask about appointments and follow-ups, and offer to drive or stay with them during treatments. Consider giving gift cards for food they like rather than bringing meals that might not suit their preferences.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

When I first received my cancer diagnosis, I was in shock and couldn't believe it was happening to me. I was a healthy 42-year-old woman and felt I didn't deserve this. However, that feeling quickly faded as I became determined to live, wanting to see my children grow up and do whatever it took to overcome the illness.

My diagnosis led to a new appreciation for life. I began seeing beauty in everyday things like the sun and trees, and my perspective on life changed. I cherish life now and don't mind aging because I never wanted the alternative. Even though I've been in remission for 20 years, I sometimes need to remind myself to let go of minor issues.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

My best strategy was staying around positive people and laughing. I always say cancer hates happy people.

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

I turned to my Catholic faith for support. I started going to church more, prayed, and said the rosary. I received a lot of help from many wonderful people during this time. One of my friends took me to a healing mass at night in Queens, and I went with my family while she brought her family. I sometimes wonder why God gave me a second chance, considering I didn't have the best prognosis.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU SINCE COMPLETING YOUR TREATMENT?

I enjoy every day! I don't mind getting older and having more wrinkles. I am the lucky one!

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE AS A RESULT OF YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE?

I was generally healthy and active. Despite this, I developed cancer. I asked my oncologist why this happened, and he told me it was just bad luck. After my treatment, I made some changes. I stopped drinking Diet Coke, using artificial sweeteners, and switched to drinking only bottled water. The medical community never confirmed if any of these factors were the cause of my illness.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN TRANSITIONING BACK TO "NORMAL" LIFE AFTER TREATMENT?

The only part I struggled with was not receiving treatment. I enjoyed active therapy because it made me feel like I was actively fighting the cancer.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

Awareness and early detection can greatly improve your chances of overcoming cancer. It's crucial to schedule regular screenings and monitor changes in your body. Early detection leads to more effective treatments and better survival rates. Stay informed about common cancer signs and symptoms, and maintain a healthy lifestyle. When people advise me to take care of myself, I remind them that I already do—I prioritize regular checkups and screenings and address any bodily changes immediately.

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

Just because you get a cancer diagnosis, it does not mean you are going to die from the disease.



his brother, Shannon moved in with us in mid-November 2008, becoming a cherished part of our family. Now 24 and attending grad school to become a speech pathologist, Shannon has been a true blessing to us.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

A friend with severe HER2-positive breast cancer inspired me the most. Her tumor was too large to remove, and many of her lymph nodes were affected. Despite her aggressive diagnosis, she underwent chemotherapy and radiation to shrink the tumor, which eventually disappeared, sparing her from a mastectomy. At the time of my diagnosis, she had been in remission for five years. Her ability to overcome such a severe diagnosis and her positive attitude inspired me greatly. I followed her example by seeking treatment from the same doctors she recommended, and her support during my chemo treatments was invaluable.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY WILL ACCOMPLISH FOR OTHERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY BATTLING CANCER?

I hope my story shows that maintaining a positive attitude and staying active can help overcome the challenges of cancer. Support from friends and family is invaluable during a cancer diagnosis, as they are also navigating difficult times. Having loved ones accompany you to appointments and treatments benefits everyone. Connecting with others who have faced similar journeys can offer mutual support. I feel privileged to share my story and hope it helps others realize that cancer isn't always a death sentence. Regular screenings and prompt medical attention are crucial, as early detection can make a significant difference.



HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

Emotional support is crucial for those with a cancer diagnosis. Being surrounded by non-judgmental listeners is essential. The medical community could enhance its support by involving cancer survivors in waiting rooms or treatment areas, offering conversations that go beyond just the disease. Survivors, having battled cancer themselves, can provide valuable positivity and encouragement. Their presence can help those currently in treatment feel supported and hopeful.

This experience taught me that the hardest step is often just getting out of bed. I now share this story with other cancer patients to encourage perseverance, even when it seems impossible.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I'm most proud of maintaining a positive attitude throughout my cancer journey. I always believed others faced even greater challenges, using the analogy: if everyone put their problems in a bowl, would you want to pick yours again? I never wanted to re-pick. I was content with my challenges and stayed positive..

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

Navigating my cancer diagnosis has been one of the most challenging experiences of my life. The most surprising discovery was my inner strength, especially during moments when I felt close to death. I focused on maintaining normalcy for my children and sticking to my routine despite the mental fog that made driving difficult after treatment. My husband was my greatest support, always encouraging me.

CAN YOU SHARE A PARTICULAR MOMENT OR STORY THAT WAS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL OR UPLIFTING DURING YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

In early November 2008, while taking my 14-year-old daughter to Boston Children's Hospital, my oncologist called with the great news that I had been in remission for five years. On the way home, however, I learned from my son about the unexpected passing of my sister-in-law, which deeply upset us, especially with concern for her 8-year-old daughter, Shannon.

My brother-in-law, affected by Agent Orange, was unable to care for Shannon, so my children urged us to take her in. My husband and I agreed, and after discussing it with

One pivotal day, feeling too low to get out of bed despite promising to make dinner, my husband urged me to rise. Although initially frustrated, making dinner eventually lifted my spirits.

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WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

T-Cell Lymphoblastic non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Stage 4 exit stage left.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS? WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

I graduated from Berklee College of Music in 1993, came home to NYC with my band, and soon had record executives start noticing us. Then, in the summer of 1994, I got sick and went through weeks of illness and testing until I got the call. My doctor said I was diagnosed with stage four non-Hodgkin's lymphoma just as my career as a professional singer/songwriter was taking off. They gave me one week to live and a nine percent (9%) chance of survival and told me I would need to begin treatment the next day. Despite the grim and frightening prognosis, I was determined to survive.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

Through my absolute determination to survive. I believed I was here on Earth for a reason. I refused to let the ordeal of cancer stop me. I focused on healing. I then shifted my career from an unhealthy musician's lifestyle to more wholesome and healthy nonprofit work. My new objective was to help others and give back. I spent nearly two decades changing the world in my nonprofit work. Then, I took another career turn that led me to real estate. My father, Ed Marks, a real estate broker in Delray Beach, Florida, inspired me to see how residential real estate could make a tremendous difference and change people's lives.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

I underwent a year of chemotherapy and radiation, which culminated in a bone marrow transplant in October 1995. That ultimately saved my life. My treatment included over 22 surgeries, total hair loss, and extreme muscle and weight loss. I could not eat for five weeks during treatment, which dropped me down to 126 pounds at 6'1". I looked like I had survived the Holocaust. I even had body parts replaced with prosthetics, making me feel like I was the "bionic man." "We can re-build him; stronger, faster, smarter..."

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

Yes, the high-dose prednisone therapy used in my treatment caused avascular necrosis (AVN) in both my hips and knees. I had to have my left hip replaced, and my other joints were also at risk. Even today, I focus on low-impact calisthenic exercises and keeping my weight low to avoid joint problems.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

My family and friends played a crucial role in my journey. My parents and family helped transport me to appointments, while my friends kept me engaged and positive. Music remained a focus during my treatment, and my

bandmates were incredibly supportive; we remain close friends to this day.

DID YOU SEEK SUPPORT FROM ANY CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS? IF SO, HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

Not really. I got some support from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC), the hospital where I was treated. But most of my support was from my family and friends.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

Just be there. Be there to listen. Be there to make them laugh. Be there to sing with them or get their favorite foods. Stay positive. Be optimistic. Don't dwell on the day-to-day misery. The people by my side every day lifted my spirits and kept me positive and focused on the goal of survival and what happens after cancer.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

To maintain my mental well-being, I listened to music, wrote poetry and music, spent time with my friends and family, and meditated.

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

I got into meditation during treatment after meeting a few of the hospital clergy staff. One in particular was a rabbi who shared some knowledge about Jewish mysticism. That was my main tool for focusing on my health and inner being. It was a big reason I survived then and why I am alive to this day.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU SINCE COMPLETING YOUR TREATMENT?

After treatment, my music career, performing live in smoke-filled venues, became impossible. I shifted to helping others through

nonprofit and for-profit work. For the past 30 years, including my role at Prime Realty, I've focused on making a positive impact.

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE AS A RESULT OF YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE?

I've become meticulous about what goes into and onto my body, and I drive my family a bit crazy with my scrutiny. I carefully read ingredient labels and focus on foods that may protect against cancer and other diseases. I've also worked to eliminate toxic chemicals from my home and environment, as I believe my disease was linked to harmful chemicals I was exposed to as a child. Growing up on Long Island in the 1970s, where there was exposure to pesticides and other toxins, was hazardous to my health.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN TRANSITIONING BACK TO "NORMAL" LIFE AFTER TREATMENT?

My biggest challenge was figuring out who I was and what I would do for work for the rest of my life. Whatever it was going to be had to at its heart be about helping other people. I wanted to give back and share at least part of the gift I was given - a second chance at life - with the world.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

Cancer awareness and early detection are vital for survival. I survived, but I had a skin lesion on my chest for months that I mistook for ingrown hairs. It turned out to be the early signs of lymphoma. Had I recognized it sooner, I might have avoided reaching stage four and the severe consequences of the disease. I urge everyone to get regular screenings, not ignore unusual symptoms, and be proactive in asking questions and advocating for their own health.

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

Firstly, cancer is not a life sentence; it is not contagious or something to be whispered about. Almost everyone is affected by cancer, whether personally or through family. Cancer results from damaged genes, causing cells to grow and live longer than they should. It can sometimes be prevented or managed through changes in diet, exercise, and reducing environmental exposures. Maintaining a positive attitude is crucial, as it has been shown to improve chances of survival and healing.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

Educate themselves and remove the stigma around cancer. Patients need kindness, love, and humor to help them through their journey. Society should be more aware of the challenges cancer brings and be sensitive to the needs of those undergoing treatment and recovery.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I wish I had known what had caused my disease and how I could have avoided it. As I mentioned, I was exposed to toxins from a very young age. Had I and my family known the dangers, I could have avoided them.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

I learned that life is fleeting. We should enjoy every minute of every day. We should tell the people we love that we always love them. Life is a blessing that needs to be nurtured and cared for.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I survived and turned a damaging health crisis into a positive life experience.

CAN YOU SHARE A PARTICULAR MOMENT OR STORY THAT WAS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL OR UPLIFTING DURING YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I focused on staying positive and using humor to uplift myself and others. In the hospital, surrounded by pediatric patients, I decided to cheer them up. Despite losing my hair, I embraced it by wearing different hats each day and adopting various characters like a court jester, cowboy, or chef. I'd visit the kids' rooms, crack jokes, and sometimes sing, bringing smiles and laughter to them—and to myself. This spirit of generosity was crucial in my own healing process.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

My first oncologist, Dr. Timothy Gee, inspired me. When I first met him, I was in late-stage lymphoma and near death. He looked at me and said, "You look terrible. Don't worry. We will get you through this." His determination and care over the 15 months of treatment, culminating in a life-saving bone marrow transplant, gave me confidence and hope. His tenacity was a powerful example that I carried with me throughout my journey.

What do you hope your story will accomplish for others who are currently battling cancer?

Your question has the word in it. "Hope" Creating hope for the hopeless is my goal in sharing my story. I was initially given a nine percent chance of surviving and one week to live when I was diagnosed. Thirty years later, I continue to prove the doctors wrong. If that does not inspire hope, I don't know what can.

KELLEY TAYLOR



DOUGLAS ELLIMAN REAL ESTATE

WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

I was diagnosed with early Stage 1 Breast cancer in August 2017, and after my five-year oral treatment, I had a reoccurrence of invasive lobular carcinoma in November 2023.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS? WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

When I was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017, my only thought was to take a radical approach and have a bilateral mastectomy, "get it out." I did not let doubt creep into my mind ever that I would not beat the disease. The power of positive thinking is what kept me going. My Douglas Elliman Breast Cancer Survivor colleagues kept me positive and hopeful.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

The support of my family, friends, colleagues, medical professionals, and past cancer survivors was what helped me during my battle. They filled me with HOPE that I could beat this disease, and I did not only once but twice.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

After my bilateral mastectomy, the hardest challenge was the physical DIEP flap reconstruction surgery. It was all part of the process to resume as much normalcy as possible and give my life back. I was kind to myself with the help of my support team to allow my body to rest and, therefore, heal without delay.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

The only complication was three days after surgery, I went into AFIB and had to have a secondary surgery to repair an internal bleed. After the repair, I proceeded with the month-long recovery period of the bilateral mastectomy and secondary surgery. Rest and pain medication were how I managed the recovery.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH YOUR TREATMENT SCHEDULE?

My treatment after my 2017 diagnosis was oral medication for five years, and I thankfully did not suffer from any terrible side effects. I was cancer-free for five years, and

upon completion of my oral medication treatment, I had a reoccurrence of invasive lobular carcinoma.

In 2023, I had three surgeries until my surgeon was able to obtain clean margins. After the three surgeries, I had seamless radiation treatment. I started my day with my radiation treatments every morning at 8:00 a.m., and I went straight to work from there. Working as a Real Estate Broker/Manager allowed me to focus on my career, not on my illness. I was exceptionally fortunate and did not have harmful side effects from the radiation.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

My family and friends were and continue to be my world throughout this journey. The most important thing they did was to ensure that I focused on my well-being and to keep me on track to living a well-balanced life. They helped me to keep life as "normal" as possible. I am forever grateful to them for their unwavering support.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

My advice to give someone supporting a loved one with cancer is to go with your loved one on their journey and supply support in a way that they appreciate. Do not think about what you want to do for them to make you feel good about yourself, but just think about what their needs are. Let them have good and bad days, but keep them focused on what it will look like on the other side of a full recovery.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

I did not allow the disease to become what identified me. I just continued to believe in the power of prayer and positive thinking. I have always firmly believed in "If I think I can, I can."

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

I have extreme faith, and I have always believed in the power of prayer and my angels to get me through adversity, and this has been no different. I entrust God's plans for me and try to live through the mentality we get by giving. I kept the faith and continue to keep it through this journey.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU SINCE COMPLETING YOUR TREATMENT?

I am currently in the middle of treatment to remain cancer-free, and it is just a way of life for me. I am grateful for every day, and if treatment is part of the process, I am all in.

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE AS A RESULT OF YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE?

I always thought I lived a healthy lifestyle as a non-smoker, social drinker only, and no bad vices, but I've learned I can do a better job at living a more balanced

and healthier lifestyle. Through my oncology/nutritionist, I try to make healthier dietary choices.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN TRANSITIONING BACK TO "NORMAL" LIFE AFTER TREATMENT?

Honestly, I was so very fortunate to be able to work through my treatments and maintain as normal of a lifestyle as possible. The only challenge is the number of follow-up doctor appointments while going through treatments, which can be very inconvenient to one's lifestyle, but it is a necessary evil.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

Early detection is the most important topic for me surrounding breast cancer as I found both my incidents of breast cancer myself through a self-exam between regularly scheduled annual mammograms. Early detection saves lives. Please do not put this off. Cancer awareness month is October, and it brings this to the attention of everyone who should have a regularly scheduled mammogram to avoid the disease getting too far before recognizing and treating the disease.

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

There are many misconceptions surrounding breast cancer. If you are experiencing breast pain,

a recent injury, swelling, or a change in the skin on or around your breast, talk to your doctor about anything out of the ordinary. Do not attempt to self-diagnose. Do not be reluctant to go for a second opinion.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

I am a firm believer that the Long Island community must be one of the largest supporters of those going through cancer treatment. These organizations share the mission to eliminate this disease through the NYBRA Patient Empowerment Program, Pink Aid, Men Wear Pink, American Cancer Society, and many local charities. My commitment is to help raise funds for those who need help financially to afford life as they are battling the disease. Breast Cancer Awareness Month of October is everyone's opportunity to focus and to give however little or big they can.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

It's not in my nature to look back. I did everything I should do with my due diligence and multiple opinions at the time. If I knew then what I know now, I would have questioned harder the lack of rationale for not recommending radiation at the first diagnosis. I cannot look back; I must stay

focused on moving forward and fully recovering.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

This experience has proven that I am a true warrior, and when faced with adversity, I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. I refuse to surrender to this disease.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

The common thread throughout my journey was I never let the disease be what identified me. I did not ever have a defeated attitude or allow myself to ask, why me? I just worked with the cards I was dealt with, diagnosed, and purged through, with clean margins as my goal. Now, my goal is to focus on the healthiest lifestyle I am capable of to ensure I remain as healthy as possible and can be here to continue to inspire others in their journey.

CAN YOU SHARE A PARTICULAR MOMENT OR STORY THAT WAS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL OR UPLIFTING DURING YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

As I have always said, something good comes out of everything terrible. My eldest daughter, Nikki Taylor Friedman, who graduated college in May 2017, was home to start her career path in Real Estate. My diagnosis came in August 2017. As a result of being out of work until October

2017, Nikki took my cell phone and handled my real estate while my Douglas Elliman colleagues helped cover my office and managerial duties. Team Taylor, as they called themselves, rallied together and lived the motto, "Tough times never last, but Tough People Do." They inspired me to take care of myself, recover, and resume everyday life as soon as possible.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have been most inspired by all the survivors and those still fighting the battle.

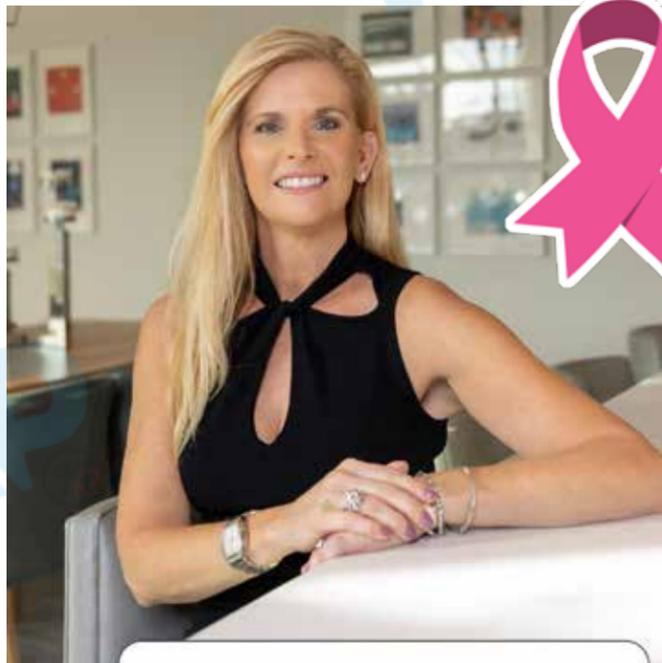
To this day, I have my circle of "Breasties," as we call ourselves, that continues to instill hope in one another to remain cancer-free and healthy. I am inspired to get the word out about early detection to limit the number of fatalities from this dreadful disease.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY WILL ACCOMPLISH FOR OTHERS BATTLING CANCER?

I hope to share my story to instill HOPE in each individual currently battling cancer. If they can believe in the power of positive thinking and rely on the support of others during the process, they can win the battle. Do not let CANCER be what identifies you. Believe in yourself and your ability to kick cancer to the curb. Do not let doubt on any portion of your brain if possible.

KERRI STRIANO

▶ cancer awareness



DOUGLAS ELLIMAN REAL ESTATE

WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

I was diagnosed with stage one breast cancer, HER2-positive, which is an aggressive form of the disease. Because of this, I needed surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radiation. I also required a year of Herceptin infusions, which is a life-saving drug specifically for treating HER2-positive breast cancer.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS? WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

My immediate thoughts were my children, husband, and family. I didn't want my children to know initially, as they were 16, 14, and 10 at that time.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

At first, I would break down in my surgeon's office but then come home and pretend everything was fine. But when I got the call that I needed chemotherapy, everything changed. I could no longer hide my diagnosis.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

Initially, I was scheduled for a much stronger chemotherapy regimen, but my family managed to get me an appointment with a top breast cancer oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering. She enrolled me in a clinical study that had been

successfully conducted at the Dana-Farber Institute. Thankfully, my doctors in Huntington agreed to follow her plan, so I ended up with a lighter chemo regimen for 12 weeks instead of the much stronger one that would have lasted twice as long.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

Once a week, I followed my routine and spent the entire day in the treatment room at NYU Langone in Huntington. I was very lucky to experience minimal side effects; the worst part was dealing with the IV. Finding veins was difficult for me, and once, I even passed out when a nerve was hit. But once the IV was in, I managed with lots of deep breathing and meditation.

The steroids caused me not to be able to sleep and to be super bloated, but I never got sick and rarely missed a day in my children's lives, which was all that mattered to me.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH YOUR TREATMENT SCHEDULE?

I was blessed with an amazing support team. My sister or mother would take me to my treatments, and dear friends would step in once the Benadryl kicked in and I fell asleep, then they'd take me home.

For 12 weeks, my mother would come and stay overnight to help with the

kids, who were in three different schools. Every Tuesday, my youngest would go to his best friend's house after school, and to this day, she still calls him her fourth son. To say we were blessed is an understatement. My kids were involved in so many sports, and our 'tribe' always made sure they got everywhere they needed to be when my husband was at work.

DID YOU SEEK SUPPORT FROM ANY CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS? IF SO, HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

I did not seek help but joined Pink Aid after I was a year out of treatment and walked as a model in their first fashion show. After that, I joined the Grant committee to assist in giving back to other less fortunate women. It's a fantastic organization.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

Just be there—go for a walk, listen, and don't ask, just do. I had to learn to let people help me, like cooking dinners, which took some time to accept. But I realized it made them feel good about helping. It's also important to check in with the kids and spouses of the cancer patient; supporting them is crucial, too.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

At first, I was incredibly scared—mainly about telling my children and

hiding my hair loss. That was the hardest part for me because it made it impossible to deny that I was undergoing treatment. But once I accepted the reality, I approached it like a full-time job. I focused on getting through it, thinking, 'Okay, God, this is my assignment now, and I will complete it, learn from it, and move on.' I also knew I wanted to help others in the future.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

I used breathwork to get through my treatments. All I knew were the breathing techniques from my childbirth classes—funny enough, they worked! Today, I continue to practice and learn proper breathwork through meditation.

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

My faith was never in question. At the time, all three of my children were in Catholic schools—one in elementary and two in high school. I knew they were being watched over, cared for, and prayed for. It felt like business as usual at home, with our faith providing comfort. We told the kids only that I would be fine, and I believed it—I knew I would be. That's the spiritual aspect: feeling protected even without understanding exactly how or why.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU SINCE COMPLETING YOUR TREATMENT?

I'm very grateful for the blessing of being here for my family and being cancer-free for 11 years now. I live a healthy lifestyle—I exercise regularly, eat much healthier, and meditate every day.

I don't obsess over my past experience with cancer; often, I even forget that I had it. I focus on self-improvement, helping others, enjoying life, and reinventing myself whenever I can.

As for lifestyle changes resulting from my cancer experience, I've committed to being gluten-free. Although I was gluten-free before my diagnosis, I wasn't fully strict about it. I also try not to control things beyond my reach, though I'm not sure if this mindset stems from having cancer, parenting, or just aging.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN TRANSITIONING BACK TO "NORMAL" LIFE AFTER TREATMENT?

The biggest challenge for me was socializing. Although I'm very social now, during my year of treatment and while my hair was growing back, I tried to hide as much as I could. I would sit in my car or hide under the stands at my kids' sporting events. I would sneak away to my beach club, hop on my paddleboard, and escape the world for an hour, then quickly return. Removing my kerchief and putting on my baseball cap with attached hair was a ritual. My hair loss was one of the hardest aspects; I never wanted my kids to see me without a head covering, and I hated my wig. I would come home, cry, and toss the wig to the back of my closet.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

Early detection is crucial. I never missed a mammogram. I had two benign lumps removed from the same spot where my cancer was eventually found. I never took any of these lumps lightly, but when the third one turned out to be cancerous, it changed everything. I didn't detect any of the lumps myself; all were discovered through my annual imaging checkups.

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?



Everyone's diagnosis is different. There is no cookie-cutter to cancer. It also doesn't have to stop you from living. You can continue to live your life just with moderation.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

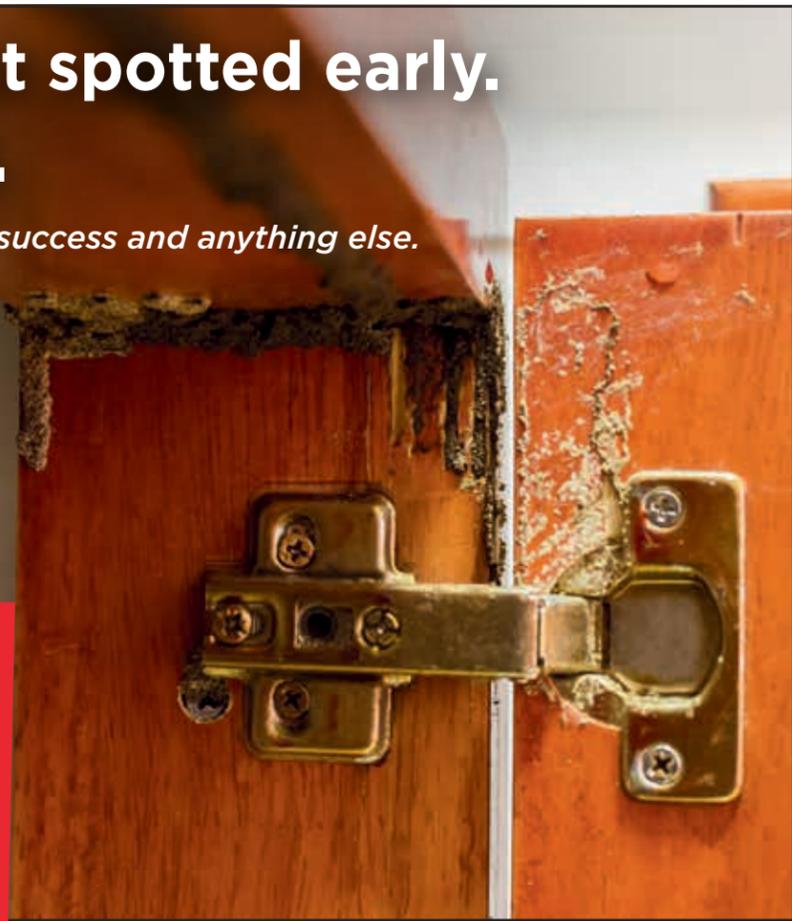
Offer assistance in any way you can. Deliver groceries, provide rides to doctor appointments, or offer counseling to family members. Simply being kind and showing care can make a big difference. A smile, a bouquet of flowers, delivering a meal, or going for a walk with them can all show someone with cancer that they are supported and appreciated. Small gestures can have a significant impact.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I should have spoken with a therapist to help navigate my emotions, especially concerning how to protect my children. I tried to pretend everything was fine and normal when it wasn't. I believe family counseling should be a standard part of any cancer diagnosis.

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WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease Stage 2B. The most curable cancer there is, which most between 18-25 years old are cured within six months. After three months of intense, debilitating chemotherapy, they told me it wasn't working, and I fell into the 12%.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS? WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

I was devastated. I was 24 and just moved to Marietta, Georgia, the year before. It was out of the blue and halted my life.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

I had to move back home to my mom's house in New York and completely change my life. I'm so grateful for my mom. It wasn't until I turned 53 this year—the same age she was when it happened—that I truly understood what it must have been like for her to see her 24-year-old daughter, once healthy and vibrant, now fighting for her life. I was weak, lost my hair, and was violently ill. Experiencing that was

difficult, but watching it happen was just as hard.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

I initially had the standard ABVD, and then I had Total Body Irradiation before an Autologous Bone Marrow Transplant (my own marrow). That didn't work, so I had a second BMT after I healed. I had dozens of chemotherapies between 1994-2001 until they ran out, and there was nothing left for me to take. That is when I started Clinical Trials. I have been on 13 since 2001, and the last one that became FDA approved, I stayed on from 2016 until April of this year, and it also recently stopped working eight years later. I have been on Pembro and Gemcitabine since April, which seems to be shrinking my tumors.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

I experienced every side effect of chemotherapy, and managing them all was grueling. Because it was 1994, and there has now been better technology and understanding of side effects, my thyroid was damaged from the radiation. I do several other



things, but the scariest is what side effects I don't know all the trials may have caused.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH YOUR TREATMENT SCHEDULE?

I have always been a fighter. Unless I cannot move, I will always stay busy and have a career. It certainly is not easy. My husband is a huge and crucial part of managing my hospital schedule. I truly believe I wouldn't still be here if I didn't stay busy.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

My mother initially took me in. I lived in another state and moved back into my old bedroom. She was certainly not prepared for what was about to happen. And although I say I'm a fighter, the first year was unbearable. The following four had me almost utterly bedridden at times. After meeting my husband in 1999, he took that leap of fate marrying me and did not possibly understand what came with that. My sister was also doing everything that she could.

My family and friends were amazing. When my hair first started falling

out, it was torture, but we turned it into a positive experience by having a head-shaving party. Later, when my hair grew back but was going to fall out again, my friend Mike shaved it off, and we all made it a fun and memorable time.

DID YOU SEEK SUPPORT FROM ANY CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS? IF SO, HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

Initially, I did reach out for support from the Leukemia Lymphoma Society and Cancer Care. Then, in 2001, I started my own foundation to fund clinical trial research for Hodgkin's Disease at MSKCC.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

The best advice I can give is to be empathetic, not sympathetic. When the patient is going through the worst of it, saying, "It will be okay," is the most said and the most disappointing to hear, or at least it was for me. I had the most curable cancer in the world and then was told I would probably have it for the rest of my life. It took me a long time to come to terms with that.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

When I was first diagnosed, my mental and emotional health was

completely different from how they were after I started the clinical trials in 2001, and again since 2013 when the last drug I was on, up until this year, was still in trial. I had to navigate life while all my 20-something friends were living theirs, but I couldn't fully enjoy it with them or even be out in public. I was definitely depressed and emotionally drained, and there was a period where things could have gone either way.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

Exercise and healthy eating have been my focus. The more endorphins you create, the happier you will be. I try to spend time doing things I love and being with people and in places I love. Positivity is the best medicine.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

We all know every inch of our bodies, at least on the outside. It needs to be addressed if you feel or see anything that is not normal. As far as the inside, pay attention to extended periods of not feeling well or not recovering from illnesses as expected. Get all your colonoscopies, mammograms, and any

other recommended routine testing.

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

Just because some may act like nothing is wrong, they are still very much going through trauma internally.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

I never realized how resilient I was. Didn't have a clue. I went through tons of chemotherapy, radiation, two bone marrow transplants, and 13 clinical trials as a guinea pig (most in the initial testing stage from the lab mice to me), and still, I prevailed and fought to get to the other side.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I am proud of how many people I helped along the way, including patients in the waiting room, who came to me through social media and emails. I impacted many people, which got me through the difficult times.

CAN YOU SHARE A PARTICULAR MOMENT OR STORY THAT WAS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL OR UPLIFTING DURING YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I met a man named John during one of my treatments. He was from Scotland getting treated in NYC at MSKCC. I always started talking to the people in the waiting room who were the most upset to try to lift them up. John and I became very close. He was cured and went back to Scotland. He came to my wedding in 1999 and has been there several times since. We have a beautiful relationship that came out of a very unfortunate circumstance.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

I was my own inspiration. We all have that voice in our heads, our conscience telling us what to do sometimes. I'm proud of what I have given to other patients and how I have handled myself throughout this entire journey.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY WILL ACCOMPLISH FOR OTHERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY BATTLING CANCER?

I hope it tells people that doctors are not Gods. Everyone's genetic makeup is different, and although there are majority statistics, that doesn't mean that you can't be the one who didn't fall into the square box.



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our community

INSPECTICORE, INC TIMMERMAN

WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

I was diagnosed with advanced Stage IV metastatic prostate cancer

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS?

May 22nd, 2024

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

The diagnosis was shocking, but I quickly accepted it. Despite understanding the severity of my prognosis, I remain hopeful and aim to defy expectations with a positive attitude and strong support system. My motto is, "Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst."

I've been extremely fortunate to have support from my family—my wife Donna, daughters Charlee and Rachel, and extended family have been incredible, helping with everything from transportation to meals. At work, Christine and Blaise Ingrisano of Inspecticore, Inc. have been exceptional, offering flexible schedules and genuine emotional support, embodying the company's 'Family First' values. This unwavering support has allowed me to focus on healing, and I hope others in similar situations can experience the same.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

Due to the aggressive nature of my cancer, my oncologist recommended an intensive treatment plan right from the start. Instead of starting with just hormone therapy, we combined it with chemotherapy to take on the cancer aggressively. I'm scheduled to complete chemotherapy in early November, but hormone therapy will continue until my PSA levels rise. Radiation therapy is on standby for a few bone lesions that have affected my mobility and quality of life. Managing the treatments and their side effects has been tough, but I'm doing my best to keep some normalcy in daily life.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

The treatments have brought unexpected side effects and complications. Hormone therapy has made me unusually emotional, similar to male menopause. Post-treatment pain, low white blood cell counts, frequent night awakenings, and severe dizziness have been significant challenges. Managing pain has been essential, and we're carefully balancing opioid use to maintain quality of life without feeling disconnected. New medications help with low immunity from reduced white blood cell counts.

A major challenge has been losing my ability to drive due to the opioids. Although I feel capable, legal restrictions, confirmed by my niece, a District Attorney, prevent me from



driving. This has impacted my independence, but the support from my family, friends, and colleagues at Inspecticore has been invaluable, providing rides and helping me work remotely. Their support has been crucial in maintaining some normalcy during these times.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH YOUR TREATMENT SCHEDULE?

Finding a balance and routine is still a "work in progress." So far, my daily life and treatment responsibilities have been manageable, thanks to the exceptional support from my family and work. My company's core values of understanding and flexibility have allowed me to adjust my work commitments around my treatment schedule and medical tests. My family has also

been incredibly supportive, helping with various responsibilities. This collaborative effort has helped me maintain a sense of normalcy and balance between my professional and personal life.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

The support of my family and friends has been crucial throughout this journey. My wife and daughters have been unwavering pillars of strength. My wife has attended every appointment, taken time off work to drive me, and provided constant emotional support. My daughters have also been deeply involved, stepping in when needed and even arranging FMLA leave to be present. Their dedication has alleviated logistical challenges and provided immense emotional comfort, significantly impacting my treatment experience.

DID YOU SEEK SUPPORT FROM ANY CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS? IF SO, HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

I recently explored external support options driven by a curiosity about life post-treatment. I joined the Red Door Community (formerly Gilda's Club), founded by Gilda Radner and Gene Wilder. This organization has offered a supportive environment in which to connect with others in similar situations. It's been invaluable to share experiences and receive empathetic and practical advice on managing life during and after cancer treatment.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

When supporting a loved one with cancer, focus on taking things one day at a time. Each day can present new challenges, so address issues as they arise without feeling pressured to fix everything at once. It's important to lean on your support networks and remember that managing this journey is a shared effort.

If you lack a strong support system, consider contacting cancer-specific support organizations. Many individuals have faced similar challenges and are ready to offer help. For those needing additional support, feel free to contact me at Inspecticore—I'm here to assist in any way I can.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

My cancer diagnosis and treatment have deeply affected my mental and emotional health. Beyond maintaining optimism, the weight of potentially leaving my family in grief is a heavy burden. The thought of missing significant events, like my daughter's wedding or meeting future grandchildren, adds to the sense of loss. Navigating these emotions is challenging, but I am supported by my loved ones as I work through this process.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

To maintain my mental well-being, I've leaned on open communication with my loved ones. Being transparent about my feelings and encouraging them

to do the same has been crucial. Although initially challenging, this mutual openness has strengthened our connection and provided significant emotional support. It has helped me process my emotions and reassured me that we're facing this journey together.

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

My faith has played a deeply personal role in my journey. I maintain a one-on-one dialogue with God, often during the quiet moments when there are no interruptions. These conversations are a refuge, a time for solace and strength.

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE AS A RESULT OF YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE?

Since my cancer experience is still recent, I'm in the process of adjusting and adapting to necessary lifestyle changes. Key adjustments include timing social interactions for when my immune system is stronger and delegating household maintenance tasks due to pain, which now require assistance or hired help. Additionally, my exercise routine has decreased as I manage my physical limitations. These changes are part of adapting to my new circumstances and will continue to evolve as needed.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

I want to emphasize the critical importance of cancer awareness and early detection. Everyone needs to be proactive about their health, recognize the signs and symptoms of cancer, and

seek medical advice promptly if something feels off. Early detection can significantly increase the chances of successful treatment and can sometimes be the difference between life and death. I urge everyone to follow their health professionals' regular screening recommendations and communicate openly with their doctors about any health concerns. My experience has underscored life's preciousness and the importance of catching illnesses early.

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

One major misconception about cancer is that a diagnosis means an immediate death sentence. While cancer is serious and often life-threatening, many types can be managed or even cured, particularly with early detection and advancements in treatment. Another misconception is that external factors like smoking or toxins always cause cancer. While these can be risk factors, cancer can also arise from genetic predispositions, hormonal influences (as in my case), or reasons not yet fully understood.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

Individuals and communities can greatly enhance their support for those undergoing cancer treatment by creating environments of empathy and practical help. Simple acts, such as offering rides to medical appointments, assisting with daily tasks, or preparing meals, can significantly ease the burden on patients and their families. Equally important

is providing emotional support—being present to listen, offer encouragement, and share in the journey can make a profound difference in a patient's experience.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

Looking back, I wish I had been more aware of the emotional and psychological impacts of cancer, not just for myself but also for my family. Understanding the full scope of what to expect—such as the common side effects of treatments and their potential effects on daily life—could have helped us prepare more effectively.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

It's too early to say what I've learned about myself, but the most surprising insight so far is the healthcare system's approach to metastatic prostate cancer. I've observed that the medical community often prioritizes palliative care, focusing on comfort rather than actively seeking a cure. This emphasis has revealed a general resignation toward curing this stage of cancer. I've come to realize that if a cure is considered unattainable by default, the drive to find one might be dampened. This realization has fueled my advocacy for more aggressive research and treatment options, aiming both for comfort and a potential cure.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

What I am most proud of in handling my cancer journey is maintaining hope against

considerable odds. Despite the prevailing medical opinion that my time might be limited due to the advanced stage of my cancer, I refuse to accept this as an absolute certainty. My optimism is buoyed by rapid advancements in medical technology and the potential of artificial intelligence to unlock new treatments. This hope isn't just a comfort; it's a driving force that keeps me engaged with life and looking forward to each new day, believing in the possibility of a cure.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

My family's resilience has inspired me. My wife Donna, in particular, has been a pillar of strength, adapting to my treatment demands with unwavering support. Her ability to manage stress and provide love for me and our daughters has been nothing short of heroic.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY WILL ACCOMPLISH FOR OTHERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY BATTLING CANCER?

I hope to inspire resilience and empowerment in others facing similar challenges. Knowing that someone else is navigating these trials can offer a sense of solidarity and strength. If my journey helps even one person feel less alone or better equipped to face their own battle, sharing my experiences will have been worthwhile. I also encourage people to advocate for themselves within the healthcare system, seek the best care possible, question absolutes, and explore all available resources.

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WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

Ovarian Cancer. Stage 1A. Thankfully!

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS? WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

I was diagnosed on June 6th, 2022, with Ovarian Cancer.

I had a constant dull ache on my left side, near my back, that I monitored for two months. Despite taking Motrin, the pain never went away. It stayed constant. I decided to visit my doctor, who took my concerns seriously. He called radiology and arranged for a CT scan the next morning. Two days later, I was informed that I had a complex cyst on my left ovary and needed to see an oncologist.

Dr. Spivak saved my life! He could have easily dismissed my symptoms as a pulled muscle, but he listened and took action, and in doing so, he saved my life!

After the initial shock, we moved forward with our wedding plans. We have already canceled two wedding dates due to my parents' illness. We were not going to postpone our wedding again.

As soon as we returned from our honeymoon, I had a 7.5-hour surgery. A two-month recovery followed. I pushed through and did everything my Dr told me, including changing to a plant-based diet. Chemotherapy was not recommended as I was stage 1A.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

Initially, there is no time to think. Just pray.

What helped me was surgery, recovery, changing to a plant-based diet, bodywork massages, reiki, meditation, stress management, and yoga. My husband, kids, and best friends got me through the most challenging time of my life.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

Thankfully, surgery was my treatment with very close surveillance every three months. I had CT scans and blood work for the first two years. It will continue close surveillance until five years have passed, cancer-free. With Stage 1A, chemo was not recommended. That's the



scary part because my type of cancer does not respond well to chemo.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

Emotional Stress was my main side effect. Fear of the unknown. Exhaustion, both mentally and physically, was my new norm.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH YOUR TREATMENT SCHEDULE?

After my two-month recuperation, I had to return to my life. I work in my superintendent's office in our school district, which has five schools for which I coordinate athletics. I was also my 90-year-old father's caregiver. I was helping him through his cancer battle with non-Hodgkins lymphoma and chemo. All while running my successful Real Estate Business! I started my real estate business in another office for several

years. Since I moved to KW, we started the Marino Team with my son, Steven. We have a strong work ethic and will not compromise our values. Steve and I have capped the last 3 of the four years at Keller Williams Realty Elite. Capping earns agents 100% of their commissions, and we have been awarded several awards for sales volume. 90% of our business is referral from friends and family, a testament to our strong work ethic! I won't let my diagnosis stop me or hold me back in any way. Instead, it has pushed me to be the best I can be.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

My husband was by my side the entire time, attending doctor's appointments, tests, and lab work with me. He took care of the cooking, cleaning, and everything in between. He also helped with my dad's care.

My kids were also there for me 24/7, offering their love and support. They helped with cooking, comforting, and assisting their grandfather's care. The care I received from my family was astounding!

I'm also grateful to my friends, who supported me through phone calls, visits, and love. They even organized meals during this stressful time.

I am truly blessed!

DID YOU SEEK SUPPORT FROM ANY CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS? IF SO, HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

I did reach out to the ovarian cancer support group. Honestly, it was a source of emotional anxiety due to listening to all the stories., I just needed to stay POSITIVE.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

My advice is to "Be There. Be Present." You may not always know what to say, but that's okay. Just make sure your loved one knows you are there no matter what! Support every aspect of your loved ones' healing, mind, body, and spirit. Have a strong faith and continue to praise God.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

During the first six months, I stayed strong. But after that, I broke down emotionally,

thinking, "Wow, did that just happen?" I allowed myself to cry when I needed to stay in bed when I needed to, but I also pushed through on the tough days. I was also gentle with myself and gave myself time to feel better.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

Prayer, meditation, and bodywork

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

My faith has always been the center of my being.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU SINCE COMPLETING YOUR TREATMENT?

I live each day to the fullest. I never miss an opportunity to be with my husband, kids, and Granddaughter. They are my world!!

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE AS A RESULT OF YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE?

I have always lived a healthy lifestyle with a healthy diet and exercise, and I will continue to do so.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN TRANSITIONING BACK TO "NORMAL" LIFE AFTER TREATMENT?

I feel like my life will never be the way it was before diagnosis. It's always in the forefront.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

As women, we are always taking care of others. We

have to pay attention to our bodies and be aware of any changes. If something isn't right, go to the doctor and follow up.

Early detection is so important! It saved my life!!

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

There is life, love, and hope after a cancer diagnosis. Pay attention to your body and find the right doctor.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

My boss, Matt McLees, Director of Athletics at the Sewanhaka Central HS District, was very supportive. His understanding, patience, and support was unwavering!! Again, without his support, this could have been more difficult.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

Should I have shopped around? Maybe. But I believe in my heart that God put me in line with the right medical team.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

I'm stronger than I thought I could be.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I didn't let cancer stop me. I have a big job in a school district, where I earned

respect from colleagues in Nassau County. I started a successful Real Estate business with my son and with the help of my mentor, Kim Holland. I also started a dessert business, creating dessert tables and backdrops for new brides, new moms, and special occasions—all while battling cancer.

CAN YOU SHARE A PARTICULAR MOMENT OR STORY THAT WAS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL OR UPLIFTING DURING YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

While going through the past two years with my diagnosis. I moved my 90-year-old Dad into my home to make it easier for me to take care of him while I took care of myself. I was blessed to say I helped guide my Dad "home" to be with my Mom again. Mom passed away in 2021, and Dad passed on May 10th, 2024, peacefully at home with his family with him—a special blessing.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

My husband and my kids. They have unconditional love and support. They have lifted me up in prayer, and I have felt their strength!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY WILL ACCOMPLISH FOR OTHERS BATTLING CANCER?

Cancer can be the Start of your life. Not the end. Only then can you truly live and enjoy each day. I take nothing for granted!!

BARRY



KELLER WILLIAMS

PALEY

WHAT TYPE OF CANCER WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH, AND AT WHAT STAGE?

I was diagnosed with stage 3 tonsil cancer.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS?

WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

When I first received my cancer diagnosis, my immediate reaction was a mix of denial, disbelief, and anger.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE NEWS OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS? WHO OR WHAT HELPED YOU THE MOST DURING THAT TIME?

Coping with the diagnosis was tough, but having another patient two weeks ahead of me as a “Cancer Pal” really helped. Most importantly, my wife and kid were my biggest support.

WHAT TYPES OF TREATMENTS DID YOU UNDERGO? CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED DURING YOUR TREATMENT?

During my treatment, I underwent a combination of 35 sessions of radiation therapy and six (6) rounds of chemotherapy.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS FROM THE TREATMENTS? HOW DID YOU MANAGE THEM?

I lost 41 lbs because I refused to eat.

HOW DID YOU BALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH YOUR TREATMENT SCHEDULE?

I balanced the demands of my

treatment schedule as best I could, depending on how sick I was feeling each day. With the support of my amazing wife, my family, my friends, and my team, I could basically conduct business no matter how poorly I was feeling. They were each my eyes, arms, and legs to execute when I couldn't. The weeks after the treatment stopped were the worst weeks. At the beginning of the treatment schedule, it was pretty easy for me to drive myself, but as the 35 radiation treatments and six rounds of chemo kicked in, it caught up to me.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE ROLE OF YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR JOURNEY? CAN YOU SHARE ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

My wife, Hope, was always there to assist and encourage me, and so were my sons and my family. At the end of my treatments, I was pretty sick, and Hope and Luke were amazing support. Plus, my team rose to the occasion, as did Troy and Amanda. What I would have typically done in person then became challenging while I was so sick.



I was able to be involved from the control room at home, where I was trying to fight and heal. Through the abilities and willingness to help of my son Luke, my wife Hope, Troy, and my Team members, we didn't miss a beat.

DID YOU SEEK SUPPORT FROM ANY CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS? IF SO, HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

Yes, I found great support through my cancer penpal, who was going through a similar journey. Additionally, my doctor/nurse specialist (DNS) was another significant source of support.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE WITH CANCER?

Be patient and offer consistent, loving support.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

It changed my way of thinking and perception of life.

DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

Fast to fight through it.

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED FOR YOU SINCE COMPLETING YOUR TREATMENT?

Eat to live versus live to eat and appreciate every day I'm alive.

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR FAITH OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?

I am a spiritualist. People go through a process when there is a cancer diagnosis. Anger. Denial. Why me? I really felt, “I can't believe this.” I could not wrap my mind around it. As a spiritualist, you find the why. Much like everything else in life, I needed to focus and realize it's not what life is doing *to me*; it's what it is doing *for me*. It was a wake-up call from our Creator to look forward to finding the *why*.

Through that time, I experienced two major epiphanies: “I used to live to eat, and now I eat to live.” My mindset is about what I eat *improving* my health, particularly as a throat cancer survivor. “Possessions are absolutely meaningless, and life is fleeting.”

We can worry about things happening, but it won't help make a difference. Instead, I am grateful to be alive, and that is what moves forward with me instead of remembering what I went through.

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES YOU HAVE MADE AS A RESULT OF YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE?

Now, I eat less.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OTHERS ABOUT CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DETECTION?

Be knowledgeable, don't be naive, and do screenings. There are tests. Listen to your body. If you feel something is wrong, check it out. Get multiple opinions. Not all doctors are the same. Understand your options. Listen to your body. Feel your heart. Follow the program. Be your own advocate!

ARE THERE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANCER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS?

It's not happening to you but for you. Find the message, the strength, and the courage. Fight like you have never fought before. You must keep a positive attitude. Look for the message, your faith, your support, and your fight.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES BETTER SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH CANCER TREATMENT?

Be respectful of the journey they are going through. Some want privacy, and some want full support. Some just don't know what to do when it's happening. Understand that each person has their preferred comfort level with

the backing through treatment, and accept that it may be different from your own or hard to understand. That's okay. Support them where they are.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

Cancer didn't affect my voice, but the exploratory surgery did. My voice is my tool for work. I wish I had more of a complete understanding of what was mandatory and elective.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

That I'm vulnerable.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN HOW YOU HANDLED YOUR CANCER JOURNEY?

I just walked right through it.

WHO OR WHAT HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST THROUGHOUT THIS EXPERIENCE?

Take every day as a blessing.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY WILL ACCOMPLISH FOR OTHERS BATTLING CANCER?

Stay the course and be strong.

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SCAN ME

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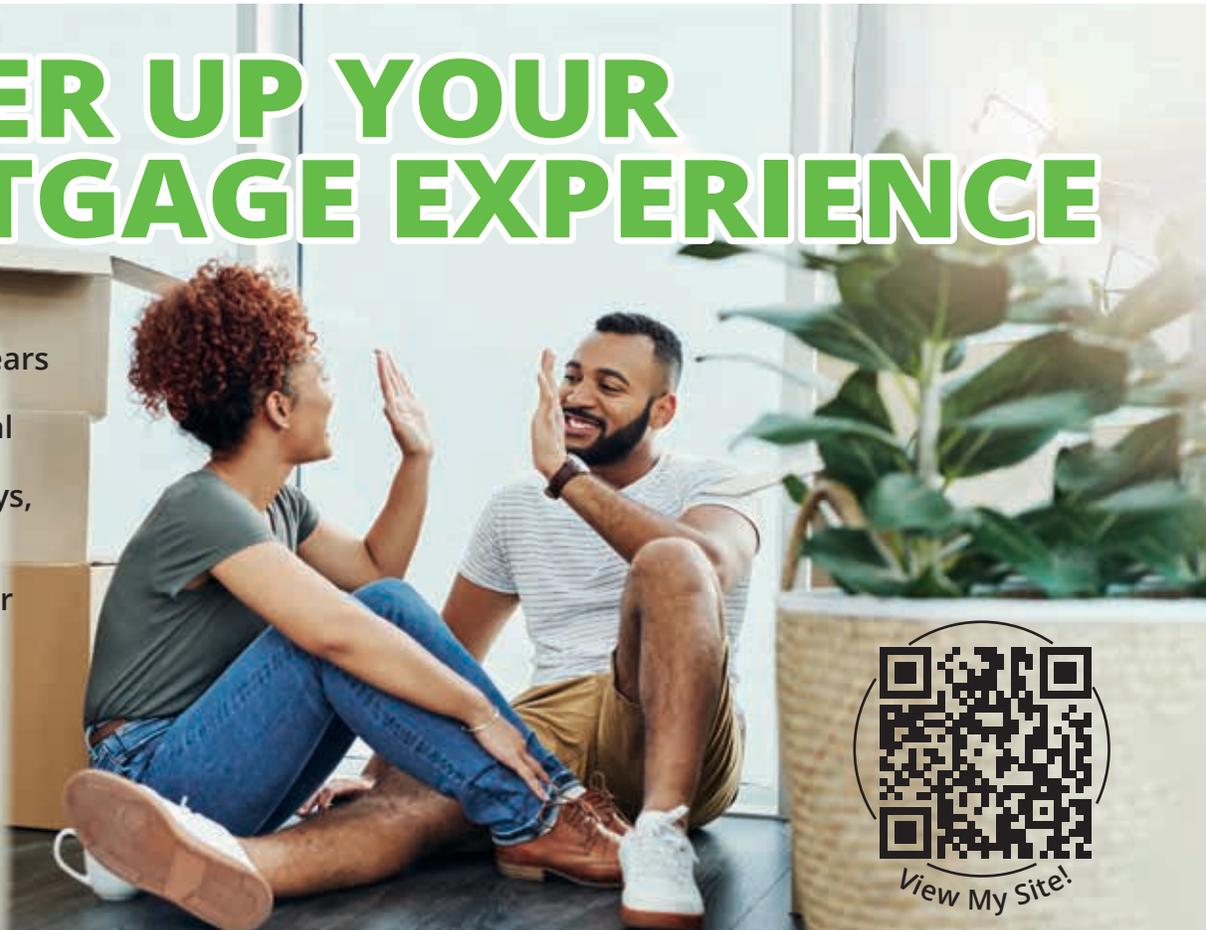




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