

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS 2019

STRENGTH COURAGE HOPE



A LITTLE EASIER RECOVERY
SURVIVOR CATHY McGRATH



MENTOR, COUTURE FOR A CURE PARTICIPANT
SURVIVOR NANCY BURKE



MISS PINK ORGANIZATION
ADVOCATE ASHLEY HERRON SHULTZ

INSIDE

Survivor stories

Treatment
advances

Screening and
prevention

Facts and myths



**MOTHER PRESERVING SICILIAN
HERITAGE IN GLOUCESTER**
SURVIVOR FELICIA MOHAN



**BELIEVE ANYTHING AND
EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE
FOUNDATION**
SURVIVOR PRISCILLA WESTAWAY

The
DAILY NEWS

Friday, October 11, 2019

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A resolve to continue the fight

"I didn't feel sick, I had no symptoms, and lo and behold, there it was."

"Being diagnosed rattles you. I don't know if that will ever go away."

"I remember saying I don't want to die."

The words are raw, honest, direct.

They're not faceless sound bites, but rather statements spoken by real women — mothers, sisters, co-workers — faced with the realities of breast cancer.

They are among the estimated 1 in 8 women at risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

And they have joined with us to share their stories as we present our eighth annual Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign.

Their motives are noble. They want to educate the greater North of Boston community, to motivate women to be vigilant



Staff file photo

Laurie D'Amore, North of Boston Media Group's director of human resources, lost her valiant battle with inflammatory breast cancer last November.

about their health, to inspire hope, and to let others like them know they are not alone.

In the pages of this special

supplement, you will meet Nancy and Felicia, Catherine and Patricia, Cathy and Erin.

You will learn about initiatives

occurring and innovations developing throughout North of Boston to aid women and men as they wage war against this pervasive disease.

You will hear from medical professionals who are caring for the patients in our cities and towns. And you will find useful information on treatment breakthroughs, diagnostic tools and more.

Two years ago, North of Boston Media Group's director of human resources was among the brave women telling her personal story. Laurie D'Amore fought stage 3 inflammatory breast cancer with the utmost of grace, determination and candor. Sadly, at age 53, she succumbed to the aggressive disease in November 2018. We dedicate this year's Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign to her as a powerful reminder that we need to continue our resolve

toward finding new treatments and a cure for breast cancer.

We offer our gratitude to the many community and business leaders who appear throughout this supplement in support of our campaign. Please join us in thanking them for making this initiative possible through their sponsorships.

Additional copies of this special supplement are available at The Daily News office, 23 Liberty St., Newburyport. We encourage you to share them with others as we join together in spreading awareness and hope.

KAREN ANDREAS
Publisher

The Daily News and
North of Boston Media Group

SONYA VARTABEDIAN
Managing editor, Features,
Magazines and Special Projects
North of Boston Media Group

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BREAST CANCER

THE SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG U.S. WOMEN

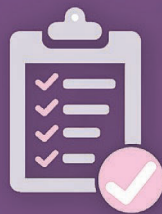
A WOMAN IN THE U.S. HAS A

1 IN 8

OR 12.4% LIFETIME RISK OF BEING DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER

WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Cancer causes cells in the body to change and spread out of control. The cells eventually form a lump or mass called a **TUMOR**. Most breast cancers either begin in the breast tissue made up of glands for milk production, called lobules, or in the ducts that connect the lobules to the nipple.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The most common sign is a painless **LUMP** in the breast. Sometimes breast cancer spreads to underarm lymph nodes and causes a lump or swelling, even before the original tumor is large enough to be felt. Less common symptoms include breast pain or heaviness, persistent changes such as swelling, thickening or redness, and nipple abnormalities such as discharge or retraction.

STAGES OF BREAST CANCER: 0 (least advanced), I, II, III and IV (most advanced)

TRENDS IN CANCER RATES

Rates dropped sharply between 2002 and 2003. From 2005 to 2014, the rate has been stable.



GETTING A DIAGNOSIS

Breast cancer is typically detected either during a screening examination before symptoms develop or after a woman notices a lump. If cancer is suspected, microscopic analysis, through needle **BIOPSY** or **SURGICAL INCISION**, is required to diagnose the disease and determine the stage and type.



RISKS YOU CAN'T CHANGE

- Getting older
- Genetic mutations
- Reproductive history
- Dense breasts
- Personal history of breast cancer or disease
- Family history of breast cancer
- Previous treatment using radiation therapy
- Took diethylstilbestrol while pregnant

THOSE YOU CAN CHANGE

- Not being physically active
- Taking hormones
- Reproductive history
- Drinking alcohol
- Being overweight or obese after menopause



Source: American Cancer Society - Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2017-18, breastcancer.org
Graphic by Heather Bremer | CNHI News Indiana

Debunking common breast cancer myths

Information is a critical asset in the fight against breast cancer. Learning to distinguish between accurate and false information can be especially valuable.

Myths about breast cancer can be as harmful as accurate information is helpful, so learning the truth and debunking those myths can be an important part of women's preventive approach to breast cancer.

Myth: Drinking milk increases your risk for breast cancer. The American Cancer Society notes that early studies raised concerns that drinking milk from cows treated with hormones could increase a person's risk for breast cancer.

However, ensuing research failed to find a clear link between the two. In fact, a 2002 study published in the International Journal of

Epidemiology found no significant association between dairy fluid intake and breast cancer risk.

Myth: Lumps indicate breast cancer. The National Breast Cancer Foundation says that only a small percentage of breast lumps turn out to be cancer. However, abnormalities or changes in breast tissue should always be brought to the attention of a physician.

Myth: Mammograms cause breast cancer to spread. This myth is rooted in the incorrect notion that breast compression while getting a mammogram causes the cancer to spread. However, the National Breast Cancer Foundation insists that cannot happen. In fact, the National Cancer Institute touts the benefits of mammograms, while the American Cancer Society recommends

women between the ages of 45 and 54 get mammograms every year.

Myth: Women with a family history of breast cancer are likely to develop breast cancer, too. This myth is dangerous because, if taken at face value, it can give women with no family history of breast cancer a false sense of security. However, the National Breast Cancer Foundation notes that only about 10% of individuals diagnosed with breast cancer have a family history of the disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that a woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she has a first-degree relative, including a mother, sister, daughter or even a male family member, who have had the disease. But breast cancer can affect anyone, regardless of their family history.

We are here for you

Breast Cancer — just reading or hearing these words cause worry. And that's natural. Everyone knows someone touched by the disease.



Today, breast cancer therapies are numerous and we know more than ever about disease prevention.

Newburyport Medical Associates consider our relationship with you to be a partnership. We offer both healthcare education and guidance. Our goal is to provide you with the best preventative care possible—so you may achieve both emotional and physical health and wellness. We will review your medical history, explore your daily life habits and help you minimize overall health risks, including breast cancer. That's the NMA difference.

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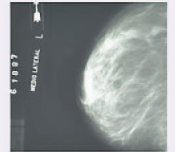


9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MAMMOGRAMS

Mammograms are the best screening tool available to detect breast cancer early, when it's easier to treat. Here's what you need to know to make your mammogram go as smoothly as possible:

1. WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is an **X-RAY OF THE BREAST** that's used to find breast changes. The X-ray machines used for mammograms produce low-energy X-rays and expose the breast to much less radiation compared with those in the past.



2. WHERE TO GET IT

Find a center that **SPECIALIZES** in mammograms. The Food and Drug Administration certifies mammogram facilities that meet high professional standards of quality and safety. If you find a facility you like, stick with it for your annual checkup.

3. WHEN TO SCHEDULE IT

It's best to schedule your mammogram about **A WEEK AFTER YOUR MENSTRUAL PERIOD**. Your breasts won't be as tender or swollen, which means less discomfort during the X-ray.



4. WHAT TO WEAR

Wear a **TWO-PIECE OUTFIT** because you will need to remove your top and bra. Do not apply deodorant, antiperspirant, powder, lotion or ointment on or around your chest that day. These products can appear as white spaces on the X-ray.

5. WHAT TO EXPECT

The entire procedure should take about **20 MINUTES**. The breast is compressed between two plastic plates for a few seconds while an X-ray is taken. It's repositioned and compressed again to take another view. This is then done on the other breast.



6. GETTING THE RESULTS

You should get your results within **10 DAYS**. If you don't, you should call to ask about them. If doctors find something suspicious, you'll likely be contacted within a week to take new pictures or get other tests. **BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE CANCER.**

7. WHAT YOU PAY

For uninsured or low-income women, free or low-cost services are available. Call the **AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY** at 1-800-227-2345 to find a program near you.



8. DOING SELF EXAMS

Medical professionals encourage adult women to perform **BREAST SELF-EXAMS** at least once a month. Forty percent of breast cancers are detected by women who feel a lump. If you find a lump, schedule an appointment with your doctor, but **DON'T PANIC** — eight out of 10 lumps aren't cancerous.

9. WHEN TO START SCREENING

According to the American Cancer Society, women 40 to 44 should have the choice to start annual mammograms if they wish to do so. Women age 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year. Women 55 and older should have mammograms every two years.





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PLANTING A NEW SEED

Garden creator's latest mission grows out of battle with breast cancer

By KATIE LOVETT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Nancy Burke assumed her annual mammogram in September 2018 would be as routine as all the previous ones.

Instead, she received the diagnosis no one ever wants to hear.

Burke, a special education paraprofessional at Haverhill High School, had stage 1 breast cancer.

"I had no worries," Burke, 59, recalled. "I didn't feel sick, I had no symptoms, and lo and behold, there it was."

Immediately, Burke's doctor at Anna Jaques Hospital in Newburyport scheduled a biopsy of the lump on her left breast for the very next day.

She met with Dr. Peter

Hartmann, director of the Gerrish Breast Care Center at Anna Jaques, who performed her lumpectomy on Oct. 11.

Following that initial surgery, Burke underwent an additional surgery to address problems that arose during her recovery. She later had a port installed in order to start chemotherapy treatment.

Four months of intensive chemotherapy followed, which left Burke bald and battling a range of side effects. She was weak and suffered from nausea and dizziness. Because of the risk of germs she could encounter in public places, she was unable to drive or even go food shopping.

Following her final chemotherapy treatment in February, Burke then began

radiation treatment, which was administered every weekday for four weeks.

The treatment was difficult, Burke said, but she is grateful she caught the disease as early as she did.

"I was totally shocked and blown away that I had this, because I went (the previous year) and I didn't have it," Burke said.

A caring presence

Burke is known around Haverhill High for launching a farm-to-school gardening program with her special needs students.

She has said she was inspired to start the school's Learning Garden when she realized the students she was working with did not know how food was grown or where it came from.

She began the program

in 2012 with a salsa garden contained within a single, accessible raised bed. It allowed her to bring together her special education students with other students from within Haverhill High School.

The project expanded to include a berry garden contained within a second raised bed and a stew garden in a third raised bed. It also fostered the growth of a garden club made up of students with differing abilities, at different grade levels.

Over the years, various groups of students — from the football team to the wrestling team to recruits in the Junior ROTC program that trains reserve officers — have united as a community to help one another and to make the garden program a success, Burke has said.

Today, about 75 students in several different special education programs are involved in the hands-on learning initiative. Burke has won statewide recognition for the program, too, including being named a Kale Blazer by the non-profit Massachusetts Farm to School organization.

Burke's absence much of last school year was tough on her students, who happily welcomed her back in the spring after a 7 1/2-month absence. She said when her students saw her walk out to the school bus to greet them on her first day back, they started screaming and jumping up and down.

"They were so excited," she said.

A personal cause

A year out from her diagnosis, Burke now has a new lesson to impart — one of encouraging others to get a mammogram every single year.

"Everyone knows me for



MIKE SPRINGER/Staff photo

Nancy Burke's student garden project at Haverhill High has brought together students of all backgrounds, abilities and interests.

planting the gardens at the school, but now I want to plant a new seed for everyone else: If they see anything funky on their body, or something weird — get it checked," she said.

Burke touts the care she received at the Gerrish Breast Care Center at Anna Jaques — from the receptionists and volunteers to the nurses and doctors — with aiding in her recovery.

"They are the most loving, caring individuals," she said. "If you need a hug, you get it. If you need a kiss, you get it. If you need a piece of chocolate, you get it."

The greater Newburyport area is fortunate to have

such high-quality care available locally, she added. Patients are able to access treatment close to home without needing to travel into Boston, she said. But because Anna Jaques is affiliated with Boston hospitals, if a need arises, a case can be shared and consultations can occur with doctors at the larger medical institutions.

"Everyone in this area should be extremely grateful for Anna Jaques," Burke said.

Burke is honored to be among the cancer survivors chosen to take to the runway on Oct. 20 for Anna Jaques' annual Celebrating Survivors — Couture for

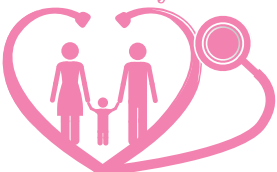


RENAE M. FREID, DO
Newburyport Family Practice

It's October, and that means it's National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. What a wonderful reminder to get your mammogram screening. We here at Newburyport Family Practice are always mindful of our patients' annual screenings, but this month is particularly geared towards ensuring you perform your self-exams, as well as making sure you are up to date with your mammogram.

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RUNWAY INSPIRATION

Annual Couture for a Cure event to celebrate survivors

a Cure Brunch & Fashion Show at Blue Ocean Event Center at Salisbury Beach.

She will join not only survivors, but also caregivers, friends and family who have been impacted by cancer on the pink carpet for the celebration of courage, beauty and strength.

Reason to smile

Burke is grateful for the immeasurable love and support she has received throughout her ordeal. Family members took her to all appointments and ran her errands.

Her students and colleagues at Haverhill High rallied around her, too. In February, the Hillies boys and girls basketball teams held a fundraiser to benefit Burke and recent graduate Madison Copeland, who has battled kidney cancer.

For the “blackout” game, players sold lanyards, wristbands and key chains that matched the theme of the evening. Everyone in attendance was urged to dress in black to show support for Burke and Copeland.

Burke’s nurses from the Gerrish Breast Care Center and her doctor, Colleen Yavarow, were among those who turned out for the event. All proceeds were donated to both women to assist with their medical expenses.

Today, Burke continues to recover, but says she is doing well.

Although she can tire easily and sometimes battles nausea, she said, “I feel really good.”

She has embarked on her new mission — to share her story. This fall, she teamed with other cancer survivors at local farmers markets to talk about her experience in hopes of promoting early detection.

She also urges everyone to slow down a bit, smile at others more, and avoid taking the little things — like being able to go to a grocery store — for granted.

“You never know what the next day will bring,” she said. “Embrace every day. Make the most of everything you have.”

It is a simple concept: Looking one’s best often brings the side benefits of empowerment and self-confidence.

For patients battling cancer, however, it is even more therapeutic and can be a lifesaving, critical component of treatment, many professionals say.

That concept will be front and center for the second straight year at the Celebrating Survivors — Couture for a Cure Brunch & Fashion Show on Sunday, Oct. 20, from noon to 2 p.m. at Blue Ocean Event Center in Salisbury.

This year’s event once again is organized and sponsored by Anna Jaques

Hospital and Institution for Savings. Bennett and Company of Newburyport is the runway sponsor, and The Daily News is the media sponsor.

Cancer survivors and their caregivers, both men and women, will take to the runway to show off the latest fall fashions and accessories from local retailers, including J. McLaughlin, Amy Williams, Clay’s, The Elephant’s Trunk, Bobbles & Lace, Edit Shoe & Style Lounge, Meraki, The Color Mint, Nauti Pearl, Pure Bliss, Smitten, and Farley’s of Newburyport.

Jeanette Cattan, a breast cancer survivor who runs the Wig Bank supporting

IF YOU GO

- **What:** Celebrating Survivors – Couture for a Cure Brunch & Fashion Show
- **When:** Sunday, Oct. 20, noon to 2 p.m.; doors open at 11:30 a.m.
- **Where:** Blue Ocean Event Center, 4 Oceanfront North, Salisbury
- **How much:** \$50 general admission; tables of six or 10 may be reserved in the name of a survivor.

patients at both the Gerrish Breast Care Center and Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, said that her

favorite part of walking the runway as one of the models last year was the connection she had with the other participants.

“It was beautiful to see everyone with their heads held high with confidence — celebrating and thriving,” Cattan said. “It’s more than just looking great. It’s about self-care and perseverance ... and sharing that with others”

In addition to the fashion show, guests this year will enjoy a treasure-packed silent auction and full brunch, followed by remarks and a brief video. Sue Tabb of Magic 106.7 FM will serve as master of ceremonies.



Staff file photo

Breast cancer survivor Jeanette Cattan walks in last year’s fashion show.

All proceeds from the event will benefit the survivorship programs at Anna Jaques Hospital’s two cancer centers.

Get your pink on for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

It’s time once again for the region to show its support for breast cancer awareness.

In its sixth year, the Pink Up the Port annual photo contest has become a community-wide effort that encourages businesses, organizations, schools and individuals throughout greater Newburyport, the Merrimack Valley and the Seacoast to call attention to the fight against breast cancer in the workplace and community.

Anna Jaques Hospital and the Gerrish Breast Care Center in Newburyport launched the initiative as one way to encourage prevention efforts and celebrate survivors.

Ideas for participating include plan a “wear pink” day at work or school, or decorate a storefront, window box or other display in pink.

Then, take a pink-themed photo of your group or workplace and submit it to ksullivan@ajh.org by Tuesday, Oct. 22.



Courtesy photo

The clock tower at the Institution for Savings in downtown Newburyport is decked out in pink ribbons for a past Pink Up the Port contest.

Photo submissions will be voted on by the staff of the Gerrish Breast Care Center based on creativity and level of “pinkness,” with extra points for

incorporating awareness and prevention.

Photos submitted before Oct. 18 will be included in a slideshow during the annual Celebrating Survivors

— Couture for a Cure Brunch & Fashion Show on Oct. 20 at the Blue Ocean Event Center in Salisbury.

The winning photo will be published in The Daily

News of Newburyport and all of the submissions will be featured on the Anna Jaques Hospital website and social media channels. Anna Jaques also welcomes postings on personal social media channels, tagged #pinkuptheport

Last year’s contest saw Interlocks Salon + Spa in Newburyport take home the top prize, with other past winners including Newburyport Fish, Mersen, Amesbury Chevrolet and 167 Water Bed & Breakfast.

Pink Up the Port is one of the ways Anna Jaques Hospital puts the spotlight on Breast Cancer Awareness Month. As part of its initiatives, look for pink coffee sleeves, mammogram reminder cards, and pink pens — all advocating for people to schedule their annual mammogram — throughout the community this month.

To learn more about Pink Up the Port and other Breast Cancer Awareness Month efforts, visit www.ajh.org/pinkoctober.

Dressing with confidence

Survivor's stylish jackets make life after surgery 'A Little Easier'

By TERRY DATE
TDATE@NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

The French blue recovery jackets were named the "Jacki" in 2001 shortly after Cathy McGrath imagined them into existence.

Since 2004, McGrath's Lawrence-based nonprofit, A Little Easier Recovery Inc., has given more than 20,000 of the jackets free of charge to breast cancer patients, including those who have received care at 17 health facilities in Massachusetts.

The Jacki, outfitted with interior pockets, boosts the confidence of patients whose post-surgery bodies are draped with drainage tubes.

Donning a Jacki, they slip into a fashionable and practical garment that covers the tubes and accommodates the drain receptacles.

The wearers then can head out for anything, a mundane meeting or silver anniversary, less likely to worry themselves with self-consciousness, McGrath said.

"These women are able," McGrath said. "They are fighting for their lives. It's not just that. They are fighting for their lives back."

The Jacki creation story leads back to McGrath in March 2001.

The North Andover woman was in the hospital after a mastectomy and feeling pain as she tried to arrange her awkward surgical drains.

The tubes, to prevent infection, drain fluid from incisions. The fluid collects in lemon-shaped vessels hanging at a patient's hip.

"What do I do with these? How do I hold them in place when I leave the hospital?" wondered McGrath, a mother of three.

Someone suggested that



Breast cancer survivor Cathy McGrath, right, of North Andover, the founder of A Little Easier Recovery and creator of the Jacki, which she is wearing, poses with Maureen Cardinal, her neighbor and the executive director for her Lawrence-based nonprofit. The jackets have been distributed to 47 hospitals in 16 states this year alone.



Courtesy photos

The Jacki recovery jacket has several pockets sewn inside for breast cancer patients to securely tuck their post-surgical drains.

she buy a carpenter's tool belt at Home Depot and put the vessels in the pockets where tape measures, chalk

line and framing squares go. Nix that, she thought.

She had her sister bring over one of her husband's

shirts, a white, button-down oxford, a roomy shirt in which she could stitch pockets.

She later brainstormed a name for her design, playing an associative game that started with the johnny that she was wearing in the hospital.

It went something like this: "Johnny, Jackie, jacket, former first lady and fashion icon Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis — the Jacki."

Voilà.

In time, as she felt better, McGrath stumbled through iterations of the jacket.

She gave it all-around pockets — set at the top and bottom — in which to tuck the drains securely.

Velcro seams allowed one-handed dressing and easy access for nurses and doctors.

In 2004, McGrath enlisted the help of a neighbor, also a mother of three, Maureen Cardinal, to send the first jackets into the world.

They brought a dozen jackets to Brigham and Women's Hospital and Tufts Medical Center, asking them to test the garments.

Within a week, the women knew they had hit a home run.

The surgeons at those hospitals were taking jackets to other hospitals to patients who needed them most.

Cardinal, a former data professional, became the nonprofit's executive director, a salaried position. Her duties include grant writing, communications, accounting and distribution.

The garments, valued at \$70 each, are funded through corporate sponsorships and donations.

Contributions to the nonprofit over the past six years have totaled almost \$1.15 million, according to tax information posted online.

The jackets are made in China and shipped to a rented space on Parker Street in Lawrence.

There, volunteers hang, steam, size, tag and bag the Jackis and Jacks (for men, based on a baseball theme). The jackets come in different sizes and colors, though the primary color is French blue.

Around 33 volunteers from the Merrimack Valley help the nonprofit.

More than 1,000 Jackis have been given out this year. Nurses and surgeons distribute them to their patients at 47 hospitals in 16 states.

Recent shipments went to Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, both in Boston.

Over the years, McGrath has received lots of thank-you letters from Jacki recipients.

They have come from women who related the confidence they gained wearing the jacket.

Some of them wrote about going to high school reunions or milestone birthday parties.

One woman wrote that after having surgery and wearing the Jacki, she had the confidence to give the eulogy at her father's funeral.

A mom said the Jacki let her play "Thomas the Tank Engine" with her child, McGrath said.

The jackets help women forge ahead with life experiences.

"Life doesn't stop at diagnosis," McGrath said. "It just becomes more complicated."

Helping people with breast cancer gratifies McGrath.

"Because this is such an unfair fight and a long journey," she said, "if we can make it easier for them, it is worth it."

For more information, visit alittleeasierrecovery.org.

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MA LIC# 9654

BELIEVE ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Cancer survivor turns her artful pursuits into a tool for helping others heal

By MIKE LABELLA
MLABELLA@
NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

Priscilla Westaway is nearing her five-year mark as a breast cancer survivor, and to celebrate, she will hold her third annual art gala at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill.

October is Breast Cancer

Awareness Month, and Westaway, 52, of Methuen, is once again inviting area artists to donate and display their work, with a portion of sales going directly to cancer patients North of Boston who are being treated at the Lahey Health Oncology Centers and whose families are struggling with finances.

Her foundation — Believe

Anything and Everything is Possible — was formed in 2017.

It has raised and donated more than \$20,000 to provide cancer patients with assistance in the form of gas cards, child care expenses, groceries, copays for medication and other necessities to ease the burden of treatments.

Social workers at the Lahey Clinic work with Westaway to identify families in need of financial help.

“It takes a village to help one cancer patient survive every day,” said Westaway, who was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. “I continue to receive treatment, and I see the need to help other patients and families.”

Artists are invited to donate works for the annual show, which will hang in the Hartleb Technology Center on NECC’s Haverhill campus on Thursday, Oct. 24, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on Friday, Oct. 25, from 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The public is invited to peruse the artwork that will be for sale, which will include an assortment of framed photographs, paintings, blown glass and sculptures.

“The artists will receive a portion of the sales, and my foundation will receive a portion, as well,” Westaway said.

A reception with the artists will take place Oct. 25 from 4 to 8 p.m. and will include a cash bar presented by a sales representative from Scout & Cellar, which is donating wine to the event. Beer will be available, too, and there will be free appetizers, courtesy of Hannaford Supermarkets.

During the reception, ribbons will be awarded in various categories: three



Courtesy photos

Breast cancer survivor Priscilla Westaway has turned her love of art and photography into a tool to help other breast cancer patients.



Westaway’s blown-glass pieces will be among the artwork and other artistic creations up for sale at her annual benefit this month.

ribbons apiece in the categories of paintings and drawings, photographs, sculpture, pottery and ceramics, and other works of art, plus one best of show and one people’s choice ribbon.

As a new part of her fundraiser, Westaway has partnered with Flavia Leal Institute to offer cancer patients and survivors free salon services, including haircuts, facials, manicures and pedicures, and

consultations for extensions and wigs.

This night of beauty will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 22, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the institute, 36 Cummings Park Drive, Woburn.

Through another partnership, the Merrimack Valley Quilters will be donating comfort quilts to Believe Anything and Everything for distribution to patients at Lahey cancer centers.

Westaway has formed

IF YOU GO

- **What:** Third annual Believe Anything and Everything is Possible Art Gala
- **When:** Thursday, Oct. 24, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Friday, Oct. 25, 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.; reception Friday, Oct. 25, 4 to 8 p.m.
- **Where:** Hartleb Technology Center, Northern Essex Community College, 100 Elliott St., Haverhill
- **How much:** Free admission
- **More information:** believeanything.org

3rd Annual

Believe Anything and Everything is Possible

Art Gala

Thursday, October 24th, 10AM - 7PM

Friday, October 25th, 10:30AM - 8PM

Artist Reception With Free Food and Cash Bar with Beer and Organic Wine from 4 pm - 8 pm on Oct. 25th, 2019

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Original Artwork will be on display and available for sale

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www.believeanything.org

In a split second, life is put in perspective

Gloucester woman calls on faith, family and tradition in battling breast cancer

BY GAIL MCCARTHY
GMCCARTHY@
NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

Felicia Mohan went for her annual checkup the week she turned 48.

It was an uneventful checkup that January 2017 day in Boston, and even the breast exam did not raise any concerns for the lifelong Gloucester resident.

Mohan's doctor fit her in for a routine mammogram, too, so she could avoid making another trip into Boston.

There was no immediate news about the results, so Mohan assumed that all was well.

Then came the call about the need for further imaging, which often happens with patients who have dense breast tissue, which can make it difficult to get a clear reading.

After the next test, they put her in a room and called in her husband from the waiting room.

"Then I knew. They said, 'We see something and want you to come back for a biopsy as a precaution,'" Mohan recalled. "I was a little spooked, but not yet alarmed."

About a week after the biopsy, Mohan started thinking that no news was good news.

"I remember it was like a Friday, and I thought I should call, but decided to wait the weekend," she said. "On Monday, I called the imaging center, and I was told they would have my primary care doctor call right back.

"My heart dropped, and I had a pit in my stomach," she said. "I'll never forget that day."

'Everything happened so fast'

Mohan learned that she had ductal carcinoma in situ at stage zero.



Courtesy photo

Following Felicia Mohan's breast cancer diagnosis in 2017, the ornate, 10-foot-tall altar erected in her home for the annual St. Joseph's novena was adorned in pink.

"Life gets put in such perspective, all in a split second," she said. "I remember saying I don't want to die. I have twins, and I want to see my grandchildren some day.

"The doctor said, 'Don't freak out yet' and 'please don't jump the gun,'" she recounted. "I took a deep breath and called my husband, who was, of course, shocked and immediately supportive. I said, 'I don't want to tell anyone until I have a plan in place.'"

Her primary care doctor at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston scheduled an appointment with a surgeon at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, explaining she would most likely need a lumpectomy. A cancellation led to an appointment three days later with a surgeon who typically is booked months out.

In the meantime, she called her gynecologist and went to see him the next day.

"I was shaking like a leaf, and he said, 'I don't know what kind of stress you've been under, but that stress needs to stop and it needs to

stop now,'" Mohan said.

Mohan had indeed been under tremendous stress, as her father was falling deeper into Alzheimer's disease.

"(The doctor) said we are seeing a high percentage of women with DCIS who are under great stress, and your autoimmune system can be affected when this continues over long periods of time," Mohan recalled. "He said whatever the stress is, it's not worth the effect it's having on your health."

Two days later, Mohan was left waiting in an exam room at Dana-Farber for over an hour. When the doctor finally entered, Mohan learned she had been conferring with the radiologists who discovered breast cancer in several spots in both breasts.

Their recommendation, based on Mohan's history, was a double mastectomy.

"It went from going to see what are my options to finding out I had no options," she said. "It's a blur after that, and everything happened so fast."

Surgery was set for Feb. 23.



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Mohan enjoys a quiet moment at Niles Beach in Gloucester.

"It took me a few days to wrap my head around what was happening and what was about to happen," she said. "I immediately turned to my faith. I found clarity in prayer as to how I was going to stay strong and focused throughout my cancer journey. For me, that was keeping it private.

"You don't know what it's like until the doctor says you have cancer — your world changes. Everyone gets through their cancer diagnosis and treatment differently. No one should judge any woman on her choice of treatment or how she takes her journey."

Maintaining a sense of normalcy

Mohan knew it was time to talk to her children, now 21.

"I wanted to stay strong for them. I didn't want to rock their world, and I knew in my heart I was going to be OK," she said. "I must have done 7 million rosaries, and I prayed to have strength to protect my kids. I wanted to keep life as normal as possible."

In the Mohan household, that meant going forward with plans for their annual

St. Joseph's novena, a nine-day open house focusing on prayer and a long-standing Sicilian tradition. That also meant erecting the ornate St. Joseph's altar and preparing massive amounts of food, from homemade pasta to desserts to the family's own limoncello.

"I said St. Joseph's is going to happen because if I need prayer more than ever, it is this year," Mohan said.

But in order to pull off the annual novena — scheduled to begin in March, two weeks after her surgery — she realized she had to tell a few women in her close circle of friends because she knew she couldn't complete the preparations alone, especially since she'd be completely sidelined following the surgery.

That year, the 10-foot-tall altar was pink.

On the morning of day one of the novena, Mohan — whose maiden name is Ciaramitaro — shared the news with extended immediate family and the women who prayed the rosary.

That night — 14 days after surgery — the usually fashionably dressed Mohan donned a baggy shirt and sweater to shield her post-surgery condition from those attending. She planned to stay seated during the novena, because that way, no one would be able to hug her since she was unable to lift her arms or even hold a cup of water or accept a bottle of wine as a hostess gift.

When the novena ended on March 19, Mohan prepared herself for the ordeal of breast reconstruction, which began with another painful surgery two days later. Because her cancer had not spread, Mohan said that balloons that start stretching the skin for reconstructive surgery were inserted during the

procedure.

At the same time, her father took a downward turn.

"No one wanted to tell me my father was dying in the wake of the extremely painful procedure, after which my husband literally carried me to bed," she said. "I remember him waking me up in the afternoon to tell me that my father may not make it through the night and he wanted to give me the option to say goodbye."

She knew what she needed to do. So her husband, Barry Mohan, carried her from bed to the car and into the nursing home and sat her on a chair next to her father. She brought rosary beads from the altar and the statue of a sleeping St. Joseph, a gift from a priest, which was placed on her father's chest.

"We sang the rosary, and I told him to go and we would be fine," Mohan said. "He died two days later, one month to the day after my mastectomy."

Mohan continued with the reconstruction. Months after the initial procedure, she began undergoing a series of fat transfers from her own body. She underwent six fat transfers before ultimately receiving a newly developed implant with a design that required fewer fat transfers overall.

More than two years out from her initial diagnosis, Mohan knows she's lucky.

"I didn't need radiation or chemotherapy. I was blessed because it was caught in a routine mammogram," she said. "I fought the battle, but the women who have to undergo the radiation and chemotherapy — they are the real warriors."

Come January 2020, Mohan will once again begin planning for the St. Joseph's novena — with a renewed spirit.

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A MANE CAUSE

Wig devotee aims to end the stigma of hair loss for breast cancer patients and others

By ERIC CONVEY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Nancy Parshley is a wig evangelist on a mission both commercial and altruistic.

The longtime advertising executive has been wearing wigs for a half-dozen years, even though until recently she sported a full head of hair beneath them.

She was drawn to wigs by the flexibility to pick a hairstyle for any occasion or engage in activities such as snorkeling without worrying about making time to spend hours in front of mirrors to become presentable again.

In 2018, she opened Mane Attraction Wigs alongside the advertising and marketing agency she owns and runs in Danvers.

She was motivated to start the business, she said, when she realized she could help fight a stigma attached to wearing wigs.

Her sister-in-law being diagnosed with breast cancer brought additional focus to her mission.

For the last year or so, Parshley has pursued a market niche providing wigs

— sometimes at substantial discounts — to women who have lost their hair due to illnesses such as breast cancer or treatments such as chemotherapy. Women battling medical conditions now comprise about half of her clients.

Concerns about appearance can be especially troubling for women, even as they battle serious illnesses, Parshley said.

“I want that piece of it to be nothing,” she said.

A 2012 research paper by professor Lucia Zannini and colleagues at the University of Milan’s School of Public Health reported medical benefits for women who received what they called



“aesthetic care” for alopecia — or pervasive hair loss.

“Our findings showed that, even if expected, alopecia is experienced as a traumatic event that challenges a woman’s femininity,” the researchers wrote. “Diverging from other studies, the wig is perceived as very helpful, since it camouflages baldness and reduces the ‘sick aspect’ related to alopecia. Patients consider their wig to be a ‘friend.’”

Parshley said the same findings and principles can be applied to women battling breast cancer.

Parshley discussed her affection for wigs in general and her drive to provide



Nancy Parshley

them to women fighting illnesses during an interview in her office, which would

be a nondescript suburban space were it not for the presence of nearly 100 Styrofoam mannequin heads sporting a remarkable variety of wigs.

The “ladies,” as Parshley calls her silent office mates, are wearing just a small portion of the wigs Parshley stocks.

They range in price from about \$129 to \$500 for synthetic materials. A natural-hair wig can cost in the thousands of dollars.

Because they are not being acquired for cosmetic reasons, wigs — or “cranial prostheses,” as prescribed by physicians — are fully or partially covered under

most insurance plans.

Parshley is able to promote wigs for other women because they passed her own tests, including swimming and driving 85 mph in her purple Lexus convertible with its top down.

She works with women of all ages, she said. And while she has yet to serve men, some husbands of women visiting her office have expressed interest in getting wigs.

Parshley took her own commitment to wigs to a new level and, at her husband’s suggestion, shaved off her natural hair to simplify the use of wigs.

For the month of October,

Parshley is hoping to raise awareness and money to aid in the fight against breast cancer. Anyone who makes a donation to Heaps of Hope through Mane Attraction Wigs will receive a pink hair clip-in to wear with pride during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

As the 60-year-old Parshley ponders eventual retirement, she expects her advertising business will continue without her. She wants, however, to grow the wig enterprise for a long time.

“This is something I’d really like to see take off,” she said.

Warriors among us — and a Wonder Woman

Miss Pink Organization and its annual pageant celebrate beauty, strength and courage

BY ALYSE DIAMANTIDES
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NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

For her first round of chemotherapy treatment, Erin O'Malley decided to dress up in something special: a Wonder Woman costume.

O'Malley, a DJ and radio personality for Mix 104.1 in Boston, was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer in June 2018. For each round of treatment, she continued wearing that superhero costume to remind herself of her inner strength.

"Wonder Woman doesn't only help herself, she helps those around her," said O'Malley, recalling how the boldly colorful costume always put a smile on people's faces.

Channeling her inner warrior, O'Malley started bringing in small "presents of strength," like pairs of socks, inspirational bracelets or "Cancer Sucks" coloring books for the other breast cancer patients to hold onto during their chemotherapy treatments.

"The outpouring of love I received was overwhelming," O'Malley said.

Finding the good

It was May 2018 when O'Malley, 47, found the lump in her breast. Less than six months before, she had gone for a 3D mammogram, which came back clear.

Several rounds of chemotherapy treatment at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery followed.

O'Malley is now marking her one-year anniversary of being cancer-free this October.

Known for sharing "feel-good stories" with her listeners, O'Malley, who lives south of Boston with her husband and 6-year-old son, has tried to be completely transparent through



Miss Pink Organization founder Ashley Herron Shultz, left, poses with the newly crowned Miss Pink 2019, Erin O'Malley, on the pink carpet at April's Miss Pink Pageant.

the process. Having endured her own experience, she now wants to give back to others.

"I'm going to find the good in this," she said of her aggressive form of triple negative breast cancer. "I knew my story could help women out there."

O'Malley is now an advocate for women, encouraging them to check themselves and never delay their annual appointments.

"Women taking control of their health is so important," she said.

Radio listeners who followed O'Malley's journey on air nominated her for the Miss Pink Pageant this past April. The annual event held at Danversport Yacht Club in Danvers celebrates

and honors breast cancer survivors.

As it's become so much a part of her story, O'Malley slipped on her Wonder Woman costume once more for the pageant — where she was crowned Miss Pink 2019 and became this year's Miss Pink ambassador.

Miss Pink Organization founder Ashley Herron Shultz said the pageant winner is someone who spreads the message of hope.

"Erin O'Malley is someone who exemplifies this," she said. "Her story is a complete story of hope; she fills a room with so much light."

Inner beauty and strength

Herron Shultz, 31, founded the nonprofit Miss Pink Organization in 2009 in

honor of her grandmother, who died of ovarian cancer. Throughout her treatments, Herron Shultz remembers seeing her grandmother's confidence in her physical beauty diminish.

"She didn't feel beautiful anymore, but I never saw her as more beautiful," she said.

Herron Shultz, who has said she struggled with feeling beautiful growing up, also saw her great-grandmother succumb to breast cancer.

"It's a personal mission for me," she said.

The Ipswich resident said the main objective of Miss Pink has always been "to help redefine beauty and celebrate women for their bravery and strength."



Photos by Joseph Prezioso

O'Malley takes the stage in her trademark Wonder Woman costume before being interviewed during the 2019 pageant.

Herron Shultz said Miss Pink today has evolved to meet the emotional, physical and financial needs of its "women warriors." Run entirely by volunteers, the organization supports women who are undergoing treatment and their families by helping with child care, buying groceries, and providing transportation to and from treatment, as well as covering the cost of medical bills.

Its signature event, the Miss Pink Pageant, drew hundreds this past spring as the organization celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Breast cancer survivors, known as Miss Pink Warriors, are nominated to participate in the event, where they're pampered with a spa day while bonding with one another. Then, they slip into their evening gowns and take to the runway to share their personal stories before a winner is crowned.

"They're being vulnerable," Herron Shultz said. "It shows how true beauty exists in the world."

Support from the community is what makes all of this possible, she added.

"It says a lot about New

England as a whole," said Herron Shultz, a former New England Patriots cheerleader.

To raise awareness, Miss Pink is partnering with Boston 25 News and Blue Hill Country Club in Canton to present the Powered by Pink Runway Show on Thursday, Oct. 24. The event will feature models from Boston 25, local celebrities and several Miss Pink Warriors.

The fashion show, hosted by O'Malley, will allow survivors to "feel empowered and rock the runway," Herron Shultz said.

As she looks back on the last decade, Herron Shultz reflects on how much Miss Pink has grown.

"We've seen such a change in our definition of beauty," she said. "We can only grow and better support these women."

In the future, Herron Shultz hopes to expand the nonprofit internationally and help more women eliminate some of the stress that they and their families experience while undergoing treatment.

"We have to continue to persevere and create monumental change in the world of breast cancer," she said.



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