

STRENGTH • COURAGE • HOPE

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS 2020



**'DON'T FEAR THE FIRE,
BECOME IT'**
Seanna DiStefano



'TRULY A SILENT WARRIOR'
Andrea Kirby, left, in memory of her
mother, Linda Brunelle



'EVERY DAY IS A GIFT'
Helen Nadeau, left, with her daughter
Lisa Nadeau Turner



'YOU HAVE TO BE AGGRESSIVE'
Joan Ayotte

INSIDE

Survivor stories

Treatment advances

Screening and
prevention

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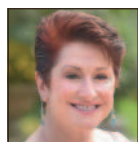
All proceeds will go to the
Gerrish Breast Care Center
at Anna Jaques Hospital in Pat's name

Beth Israel Lahey Health 
Anna Jaques Hospital

MORE STORIES ON THE WEB AT NEWBURYPORTNEWS.COM



'YOU GET YOUR LIFE BACK': Two-time survivor Linda DeCola Sheehan thankful for early detection



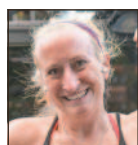
'BE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU HAVE': Aurelie Alger says success stories need to be shared, celebrated



'I PLAN TO LIVE A LONG LIFE': Angela Tita Antonopoulis calls on inner titan in face of breast cancer



'HOPE COMES AT THE END': Friendship helped Maureen Aylward through darkest moments



'GET UP AND FIGHT BACK': Jeannine Pelkey drew strength through running, workout tribe



'YOU WILL GET THROUGH IT': Doreen DiSalvo says be yourself and stay open to what comes



'A GOOD WAKE-UP CALL': Routine exams, diagnosis prove to be motivators for Maria Allen

TO OUR READERS

A united front against breast cancer

In early September, we put out a call throughout the North of Boston region seeking stories from breast cancer survivors and others for our ninth annual special supplement.

We encouraged individuals to tell us of instances of courage, hope, determination, fear, survival and even loss.

The calls and emails started coming at once. And they didn't stop coming. Even this week as we were about to go to print, women continued reaching out.

Single mothers, grandmothers, young women and retirees. They called on behalf of themselves, their moms, their daughters and their friends.

Their stories were all uniquely raw and personal.

Some credited a mammogram or a self-examination with saving their life. Others talked about the pain and isolation of the disease. A couple of women told how they fought through one diagnosis, only to be confronted with breast cancer a second time.

A daughter who lost her mother when she was young wanted people to know what a warrior she was. One husband whose wife successfully beat breast cancer 10 years ago explained how he was now losing her to dementia and Parkinson's disease.

We listened as many fought back tears, some more successfully than others, as they offered a glimpse into their private worlds.

When we asked what compelled them to come forward, their answers, not surprisingly, were very much the same.



Even those who said they initially hesitated to connect with us ultimately decided to tell their stories for the sake of others.

They wanted to offer advice and perspective to those newly diagnosed. They wanted to tell women in the throes of treatment that things do get better. They wanted to stress the importance of early detection and implore women to schedule their annual exams. And they wanted to warn women — and men, too — who think they're immune that they're not.

"I had a few people reach out to me in my early days of diagnosis, and their stories inspired me," says Aurelie Alger, a lawyer, wife and mother from North Andover, who faced stage 2B cancer in 2018.

"Since I've recovered, in my own way, I've tried to be a resource for other women who are experiencing this because ... having positive

examples when you are diagnosed and treating it is very important in helping with one's own perspective."

There wasn't a lot of sugar-coating. But there wasn't only negativity either.

The final message, even in the most tragic of circumstances, was always one of hope for a future with fewer occurrences and less heartache around the disease.

"When you go through this, hope is the last thing that arrives," says Maureen Aylward, of Rockport, who was diagnosed with early stage 2 breast cancer last year. "Hope comes at the end. Hope comes when you get through it and the light comes back for hope."

Many of those we heard from thanked us for our annual commitment to raising awareness about breast cancer and bringing attention to ongoing efforts

toward a cure.

But the gratitude rests squarely with them.

Without the stories of the women featured in this section and in additional stories that you will find online at www.newburyportnews.com, we would be hard-pressed to continue our campaign.

We once again also offer our appreciation for the many community and business leaders who appear throughout this supplement in support of our initiative. Please join us in thanking them for making this campaign possible through their generosity.

KAREN ANDREAS
Publisher
The Daily News and
North of Boston Media Group

SONYA VARTABEDIAN
Managing editor for features
North of Boston Media Group

NOBMG.com

No two women are the same. But when it comes to breast cancer, women from all walks of life share various risk factors for a disease that the World Health Organization indicates is the most frequent cancer among women, including in American women, with the exception of nonmelanoma skin cancers.

Risk factors are anything that affects the likelihood an individual will get a certain disease. The American Breast Cancer Foundation notes that various factors — some that result from lifestyle choices and others that can't be changed — can increase a woman's risk of developing the disease.

Recognizing these risk factors can help women make any necessary adjustments and also highlights the importance of routine cancer screenings that can detect the presence of the disease in its earliest, most treatable stages.

Lifestyle-related risk factors

The American Breast Cancer Foundation notes that certain habits or behaviors can increase a woman's risk for breast cancer. But the good news is that women who realize the link between certain habits or behaviors and breast cancer can avoid those behaviors to decrease their risks.

According to Breastcancer.org, the following are some habits, behaviors or lifestyle choices that can increase breast cancer risk:

Alcohol consumption: Breastcancer.org notes that researchers have uncovered links between the consumption of alcoholic beverages and hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer.

One study found that women who consume three alcoholic beverages per week have a 15% higher risk of developing breast cancer than women who don't drink at all. And while research into the connection is limited, a 2009 study

KNOW YOUR RISKS

Lifestyle, genetics factor into breast cancer

STAY VIGILANT: EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Women can be proactive in the fight against breast cancer by learning to identify early warning signs of the disease.

The nonprofit breast cancer advocacy organization Susan G. Komen notes that the warning signs for breast cancer are not the same for all women, but the most common signs include a change in the look or feel of the breast or a change in the look or feel of the nipple.

A discharge from the nipple is another potential warning sign.

Physical changes in the breast can vary, but Susan G. Komen advises women who notice these changes

to bring them to the attention of their physicians immediately:

- Lump, hard knot or thickening inside of the breast or underarm area
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin

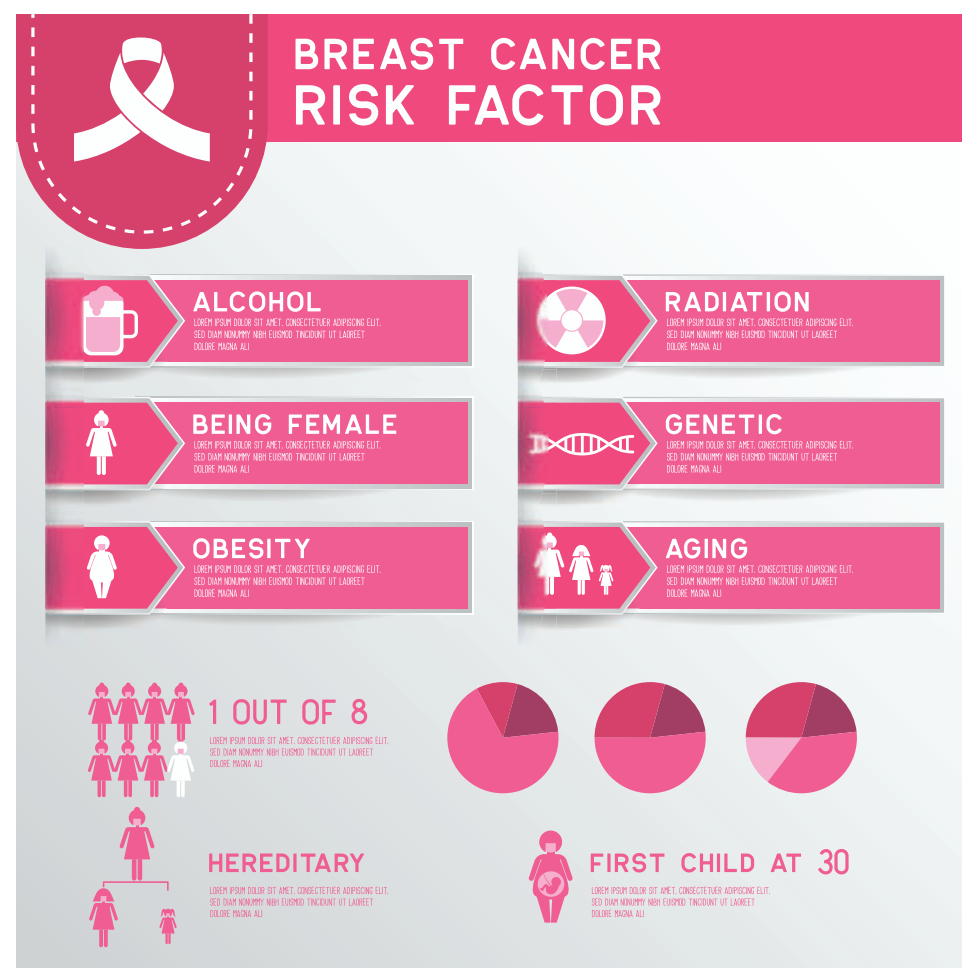
Women with breast cancer also may notice physical changes in their nipples, including:

- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
 - Pulling in of the nipple or other parts of the breast
- It's important that women

found a link between alcohol consumption and breast cancer recurrence.

Sedentary lifestyle: Exercise consumes and controls blood sugar and limits blood levels of insulin

growth factor. That's an important connection, as insulin growth factor can affect how breast cells grow and behave. A sedentary lifestyle also can increase a woman's risk of being



recognize that physical changes in their breasts are not necessarily indicative of breast cancer. In fact, the American Breast Cancer Foundation notes that not all lumps in the breast cause cancer and that many such lumps are benign.

Fibroadenomas and intraductal papillomas are examples of benign lumps, though it's important to note that even benign conditions such as these may put women at greater risk of developing breast cancer.

Susan G. Komen notes that breast tissue naturally has a lumpy texture. If lumpiness can be felt throughout the breast

and it feels like your other breast, then it's likely that this is just the normal texture of your breasts.

However, women concerned by a lump or lumpy texture are urged to discuss those concerns with their physicians immediately.

Discharge from the nipple is another potential sign of breast cancer, but Susan G. Komen notes that it's a rare sign.

Discharges that occur without squeezing the nipple, occur in only one breast or are bloody or clear, however, tend to be more indicative of serious conditions, including breast cancer.

obese, which the foundation notes is a risk factor for breast cancer among postmenopausal women.

Smoking: Smoking has long been linked to cancer, and Breastcancer.org notes that

smoking has been linked to a higher risk of breast cancer in younger, premenopausal women.

Unchangeable risk factors

Unfortunately, many risk

factors for breast cancer are beyond a woman's control.

For example, the American Breast Cancer Foundation notes that roughly two out of three invasive breast cancers occur in women age 55 and older. Women cannot change their ages, but recognizing the link between age and breast cancer risk is important, as such a recognition may compel more women 55 and older to prioritize cancer screening.

Gender and family history are two additional unchangeable risk factors for breast cancer. Women are much more likely to get breast cancer than men. In addition, Breastcancer.org notes that between 5% and 10% of breast cancers are believed to be caused by abnormal genes that are passed from parent to child.

Women are not helpless in the fight against breast cancer. Knowledge of breast cancer, including its various risk factors, is a great weapon against it as women look to reduce their potential of developing the disease.

'You have to advocate for yourself'

JOAN AYOTTE — survivor of triple-negative breast cancer — urges others to 'be vigilant'

By HEATHER ALTERISIO
halterisio@northofboston.com

Three years ago, Joan Ayotte was in the shower when she found a lump in her breast.

"It was rock solid, a perfectly shaped-sized-pea, and I knew instantly what it was," she said, adding that her mother and her mother's two sisters both died from metastatic breast cancer.

The Newburyport mother of two immediately called Anna Jaques Hospital and scheduled an ultrasound for the next day.

During the ultrasound, a second lump was found in the same breast and within a week, the medical staff took biopsies.

On March 10, 2017, Ayotte, 57 at the time, was officially diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer and advised to have a double mastectomy and chemotherapy.

"Initially, I was horrified and frightened," she said.

But after thinking about it, "I realized that it was the best choice for me to have a double mastectomy, given the family history, and to reduce my chances of recurrence," she said.

Ayotte had a double mastectomy about three weeks later, recuperated for about two weeks and then began six months of chemotherapy. Two months after that, she had reconstructive surgery.



RYAN MCBRIDE/Staff photo

A survivor of triple-negative breast cancer, Newburyport resident Joan Ayotte is thankful for the support from family, friends, care providers and other patients who helped her get through treatment.

During this time, she also had some genetic testing done, which resulted in her testing positive for an abnormal PALB2 gene, a partner of the BRCA2 gene that makes it more likely for a person to be diagnosed with cancer.

"I had never known that I had this, and I'm very glad that I had the testing because it explains a lot of the family history to me now," Ayotte said.

She has since shared this

information with other family members, including her children, nieces and nephews, so they are aware of what's at risk.

"I feel that it's an awareness factor," she said. "I'm not suggesting for instance, that my daughter undergo surgery, but it's important that she knows, and also that my son knows because a male could be a carrier of this gene."

Ayotte credits her support system, which included her husband and a small group

of friends, for helping her through treatment.

Additionally, she said that the "wonderful" team at the Gerrish Breast Care Center at Anna Jaques Hospital "was a real source of great comfort and support."

Through this experience, Ayotte said she's found "quite a cluster" of other women with triple-negative breast cancer on the North Shore.

She finds that "interesting," because triple-negative

breast cancer is relatively rare, accounting for only about 10% to 20% of diagnosed breast cancers.

"It is considered to be more aggressive and have a poor prognosis than other types of breast cancers," she explained. "There are fewer targeted medicines that can treat it, so I consider myself lucky that it was found early on."

Ayotte, now 61, advises others to "be vigilant," especially those who have a family history.

"Keep up with your mammograms, do self-examinations and just be aware,"

she said.

"If something doesn't seem right, you have to advocate for yourself, and you have to be aggressive."

Ayotte said that there are support groups both online and at the breast cancer center, which she recommends that other breast cancer patients join, "not to compare stories, but to identify."

"It's important to identify, and it makes such a difference to talk to somebody who is going through or has been through the experience," she said. "It is frightening, but you can do it."

WHAT IS TRIPLE-NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER?

Triple-negative breast cancer is a kind of breast cancer that does not have any of the receptors that are commonly found in breast cancer.

Think of cancer cells as a house. The front door may have three kinds of locks, called receptors.

One is for the female hormone estrogen.

One is for the female hormone progesterone.

One is a protein called human epidermal growth factor (HER2).

If an individual's cancer has any of these three locks, doctors have a few keys (like hormone therapy or other drugs) they can use to help destroy the cancer cells.

But for those people who have triple-negative breast cancer, it means those three locks aren't there. So the keys doctors usually use won't work. But chemotherapy is still an effective option.

Often, patients first need to have the lump removed (a lumpectomy) or the entire breast removed (a mastectomy). Then, they have chemotherapy treatments to target any cancer cells that can't be seen — cells remaining in the breast or that may have spread into other parts of the body. Sometimes doctors recommend chemotherapy before surgery to shrink the cancer.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Reaching out for support: Program pairs patients with compassionate peers

Individuals diagnosed with breast cancer who want to speak with someone who has survived the disease can do so thanks to a unique program sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

The Reach to Recovery program from the cancer

society connects current cancer patients with breast cancer survivors via an online chat.

Patients, regardless of where they are in their cancer journeys, can connect with volunteers for one-on-one support. Volunteers can help patients cope with

treatment and side effects, while also offering advice on speaking with friends and family, working while receiving treatment and more. Even people facing a possible breast cancer diagnosis can sign up.

The program works by asking patients and

volunteers to join the group and create profiles on the Reach to Recovery website.

Patients then look for a match by searching volunteer profiles, filtering through suggested matches and sending an online chat request to volunteers. Patients and volunteers

can then schedule a chat and discuss any concerns patients may have.

Volunteers with the Reach to Recovery program are breast cancer survivors who have been trained by the organization to provide peer-to-peer support to people facing a

breast cancer diagnosis. Volunteers can provide support to patients, but are prohibited from offering medical advice.

More information about the Reach to Recovery program, including how to join as a patient or volunteer, is available at reach.cancer.org.

HONORING 'A SILENT WARRIOR'

ANDREA KIRBY cherishes her late mother's formidable will to survive

By DAVE ROGERS
DROGERS@
NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

When Linda Brunelle was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1994, one of her goals was to live long enough to see her then-12-year-old daughter graduate from high school.

Having been given just six months to two years to live, the odds seemed long, if not impossible, to overcome.

"My mother started chemo, radiation and every treatment possible," Andrea Kirby, of Amesbury, said.

"She tried experimental treatments, participating in research studies, anything that would keep her alive. She went through hell — never going into remission, never growing her hair back."

And she did this for seven years.

"I believe she had metastatic breast cancer as it spread throughout her body," Kirby said. "I was so young at the time I don't remember. I wish I knew."

With her immutable will to survive and her love of her family, Brunelle beat the odds and got to see her daughter finish high school. Soon after, the lifelong Methuen resident passed away, in 2000, at the age of 52.

"Now that I am a mother myself, I understand that she did this for me," Kirby, who has two children, ages 9 and 11, said of her mother's determination to survive for as long as she could.

In addition to the unwavering support of her family, Kirby said her mother's valiant efforts to ward off cancer were aided by a support group at Holy Family Hospital in Methuen.

"In the '90s, there wasn't as much support and treatment options as there is now," Kirby said. "She found



Andrea Kirby, left, says now that she is a mother herself, she realizes her late mother, Linda Brunelle, right, fought to stay alive for seven years following her breast cancer diagnosis so that she could see her mature into a young adult.

comfort in regularly going to the Holy Family (Hospital) breast cancer support group."

Asked what advice she'd give someone going through what her family has experienced, Kirby, who has undergone extensive genetic testing and does not carry

the breast cancer gene, said it's important to take on one day at a time.

"Every day is a blessing and treat each day with love," she said. "You have to move forward, despite obstacles."

Kirby said while she is

typically a private person, she wanted to share her mother's story as a way to honor her.

"She truly was a silent warrior," Kirby said of Brunelle. "I am the mother I am today because of my mother."



Linda Brunelle, of Methuen, lived long enough to see her daughter graduate high school before succumbing to breast cancer in 2000 at the age of 52.

MIT professor, survivor wins \$1M research prize

A Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor using computer science to detect cancer and discover new drugs has won a new \$1 million award for artificial intelligence.

The world's biggest AI society awarded its top prize last month to Regina Barzilay, a professor at MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory in Cambridge.

MIT says Barzilay is a breast cancer survivor whose 2014 diagnosis led her to shift her AI work to creating systems for drug development and early cancer diagnosis.

Her early diagnosis tool has been tested in multiple hospitals, including Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital and others in Taiwan and Sweden.

She's the inaugural winner of the new annual award given by the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence and funded by Chinese online education company Squirrel AI.

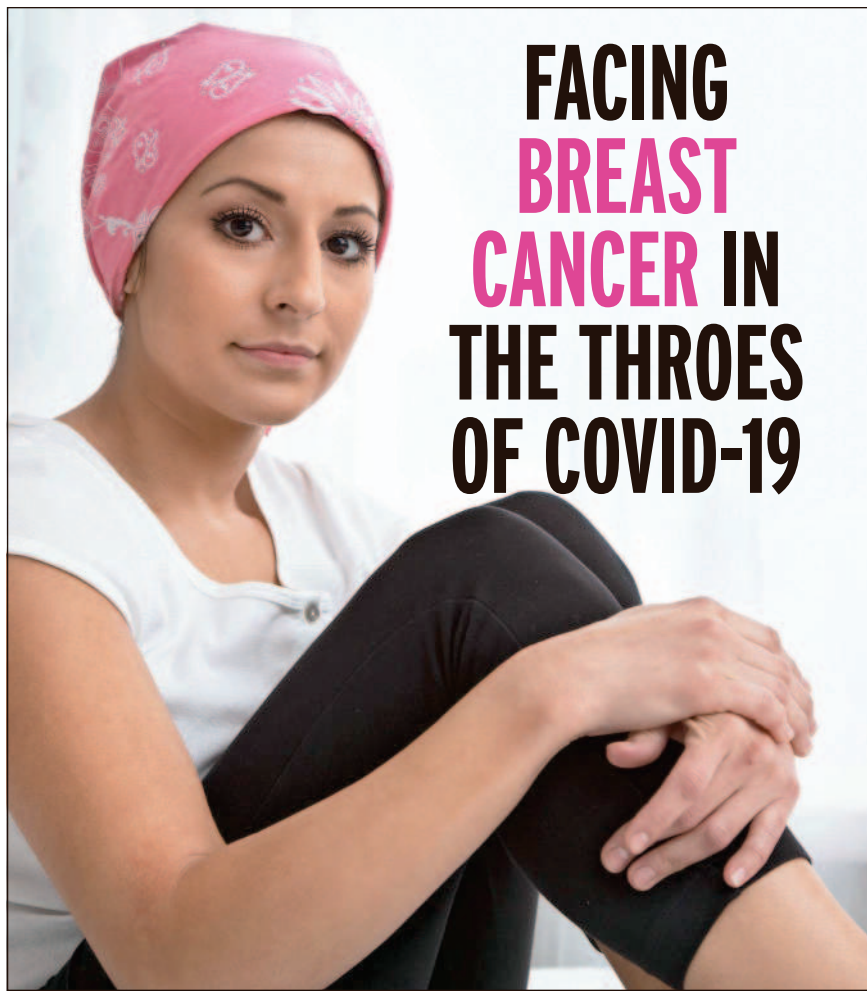
It's meant to elevate AI advancements to the level of a Nobel Prize or computer science's Turing Award, while also highlighting AI research that benefits society.

— Associated Press



JONATHAN WIGGS/The Boston Globe via AP

Regina Barzilay shifted her work to creating systems for drug development and early cancer detection following her 2014 diagnosis.



FACING BREAST CANCER IN THE THROES OF COVID-19

There's no question COVID-19 has changed life for the foreseeable future and has made times especially difficult for people with preexisting health conditions.

Breast cancer patients may have had to face the possibility of altering or delaying treatment with their oncologists because of increased risk factors presented by the coronavirus.

Medical News Today reports that the symptoms of COVID-19 may be more severe for breast cancer patients. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that undergoing cancer treatment can weaken the immune system, further increasing a person's vulnerability to infection.

Specifically, targeted therapies, chemotherapy and radiation can weaken the immune system and compromise its ability to fight off the coronavirus. Furthermore, these treatments also may cause lung problems that can exacerbate COVID-19 symptoms,

particularly among breast cancer patients whose cancer has metastasized to the lungs.

In April 2020, new guidelines for prioritizing and treating breast cancer patients during the COVID-19 pandemic were released, compiled by a group of U.S. medical organizations, including the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, the American College of Radiology and the Comprehensive Cancer Network.

At hospitals where resources and staff became limited at the height of treatment efforts during the pandemic, doctors had to define which breast cancer patients needed urgent care and which could have delayed or alternative treatments.

These measures were intended to help balance maintaining positive survival outcomes while reducing risk of exposure to the virus, according to the American Society of Breast Surgeons.

Breast cancer patients were broken down into priority levels of A, B and C for urgency of care.

■ **Priority A:** A patient has conditions that are immediately life-threatening or require urgent treatment.

■ **Priority B:** A patient has conditions that don't require immediate treatment, but he or she should begin treatment before the end of the pandemic.

■ **Priority C:** A patient has conditions for which treatment can be safely put on hold.

Medical experts say breast cancer patients are further urged to take extra caution in their daily activities to help reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19. That means always wearing a mask or another face covering when interacting with other people. This advice may be applicable even if a 6-foot distance can be maintained.

Breast cancer patients are also advised to wash hands frequently, especially when coming in from public places and, if possible, to ask a friend or family member to do their shopping or run errands to limit exposure to other people and crowds.

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Dr. Samantha Mein, Dr. Cathleen Doucette, Dr. Nyla Lambert, Dr. Laura Anne Potvin, Dr. Vivian Chung



Thinking of our colleague Dr. Horn during October and everyday

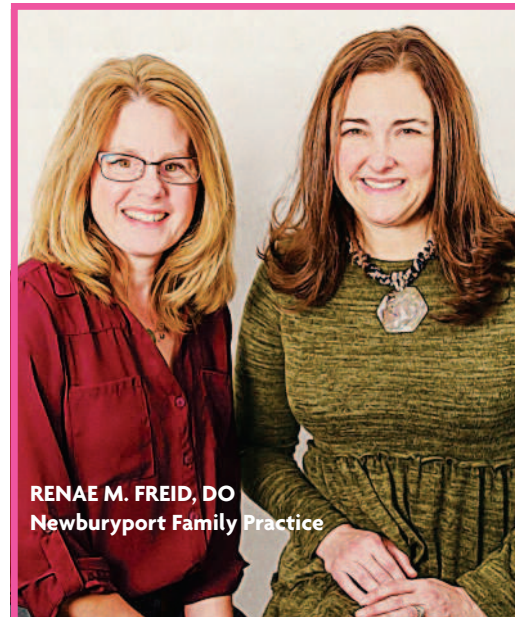
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RENAE M. FREID, DO
Newburyport Family Practice

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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‘Don’t fear the fire, become it’

SEANNA DISTEFANO is a living example that mammograms matter



Courtesy photo

Now cancer-free, Seanna DiStefano educates employers on the importance of preventive health care and shares her breast cancer story at workplace wellness conferences.

BY MARY WILLIAMSON
ANNA JQUES HOSPITAL

Seanna DiStefano has always been disciplined about her health, nutrition and physical fitness regimen.

Highly in tune with her body, she’s been an avid CrossFit devotee in her 30s and 40s

But a family history of breast cancer demanded vigilance.

Her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 65, so DiStefano started conversations with caregivers early and had her first mammogram when she was in her mid-30s.

A small change was detected in 2017, when DiStefano, who lives in Seabrook, was 47. A biopsy revealed precancerous cells. Her primary care physician referred her to breast surgeon specialist Dr. Peter Hartmann at the Gerrish Breast Care Center at Anna Jaques Hospital in Newburyport.

Hartmann performed an initial surgery that revealed cancer in a ductal area. During a second procedure to remove additional tissue, he discovered invasive cancer in the pectoral muscles

at the back of her breast.

DiStefano recalls the day Hartmann called to inform her that she had cancer and would need surgery. She was in her car, on the way to a Hallmark store for an errand.

After taking some time in the car to compose herself, she entered the store and saw a bracelet that read, “Don’t fear the fire, become it.”

Being a spiritual person, she was struck by the twist of fate. It was a message she interpreted as preparing her for the next steps in her journey. It became a mantra for DiStefano and her care team.

DiStefano was able to receive all of her treatment locally. She underwent three months of chemotherapy at the Anna Jaques Cancer Center affiliated with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, followed by radiation therapy in January and February 2018 supervised by Dr. Claire Fung of Alliance Oncology.

Now cancer-free and on a hormone therapy regimen, she continues to see her oncologist and rotates between a mammogram and an MRI every six months.

She is grateful for the support she continues to receive from her partner of 20

years, her family and from her employer, Cigna, whose colleagues encouraged her to share her story as part of her healing process. Professionally, DiStefano educates employers on the importance of preventive health care. She now routinely uses her personal cancer journey to emphasize that mammograms matter and has become a keynote speaker at workplace wellness conferences.

Prior to the arrival of the coronavirus, DiStefano was also a volunteer for Hope Lodge, a nonprofit organization run by the American Cancer Society that provides accommodations for patients undergoing treatment away from home. The lodge is temporarily closed.

DiStefano urges women not to neglect critical cancer screenings, even during the more challenging times of the pandemic. She said early detection through a mammogram helped to discover her cancer, offering her the best possible chance for survival.

“You must be your own advocate, ask questions, take control and develop strong, open relationships with your doctors so you can make the most informed decisions,” she said.

Honoring a local champion

Virtual 5K in memory of **PAT CONNELLY** to step off in support of breast cancer care

Anna Jaques Hospital and the Institution for Savings are teaming together to remember a community champion, while raising funds to support patient care in Newburyport in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The Pat-Walk for a Cure — a virtual 5K that will take place between Sunday, Oct. 18, and Sunday, Oct. 25 — honors former Institution for Savings vice president Pat Connelly, who passed away suddenly in June.

All proceeds will be donated to the Gerrish Breast Care Center at Anna Jaques in Connelly’s name.

A native of Newburyport, Connelly was a 38-year



Courtesy photo

The Pat-Walk for a Cure pays tribute to former Institution for Savings vice president and Anna Jaques Hospital corporator Pat Connelly.

employee of the Institution for Savings, as well as a longtime corporator of Anna

Jaques Hospital.

The idea for the virtual walk was developed after the annual breast cancer awareness community event hosted by the Institution for Savings and Anna Jaques Hospital the last several years was canceled over concerns with COVID-19. That collaboration had resulted in the popular Couture for a Cure fashion show the last couple of years.

This year’s virtual 5K takes the catwalk to the streets for a Pat-Walk instead. Participants are encouraged to dress like they are walking a fashion show catwalk. Signs with photos of Connelly will line the route, along with photos of past “Celebrating

Survivors” events and wellness tips.

Participants can choose to walk the route at any time during Pat-Walk week, beginning and ending at one of four of Connelly’s favorite local spots — the Institution for Savings main office at 93 State St., where she went from teller to vice president over the course of almost four decades; Newburyport High School at 241 High St., from which she graduated in 1964; Anna Jaques Hospital on Highland Avenue, and the boardwalk along the Newburyport waterfront.

The cost to register for the walk is \$25, with additional donations welcome. All registrants will receive a

Pat-Walk for a Cure T-shirt.

To register, visit the bank’s website at institutionforsavings.com and click on Pat-Walk for a Cure at the top of the page or visit ajh.org/celebratingsurvivors. For more information or to post a yard sign, contact Mary Anne Clancy at the bank at 978-225-1324 or email her at marketing@institutionforsavings.com.

In addition to the walk, Anna Jaques is partnering with local organizations to host complementary activities for breast cancer survivors throughout October.

Events include a gentle outdoor exercise class with YWCA Encore at Atkinson Common on High Street on

Mondays at 1 p.m. throughout the month, a gentle virtual exercise class with YWCA Encore via Zoom on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m., as well as yoga, meditation and journaling with North of Boston Cancer Resource.

A Sip and Shop at J. McLaughlin at 6 Inn St. takes place Saturday, Oct. 24, at 10 a.m. Fresh Hair Studio, 188 Newburyport Turnpike, is also donating a percentage of its sales throughout the month to the Gerrish Breast Care Center.

To learn more about all of the activities planned, to schedule a mammogram or to read the stories of breast cancer survivors, visit ajh.org/pinkoctober.

LAURIE JEWETT:

Self-care and a positive attitude are essential

By JULIE HUSS

JHUSS@NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

Name: Laurie Jewett

Age: 45

Hometown: Newburyport

Background: Single mother of two teenagers, 14 and 13; works in sales/leadership for a technology company; active runner and triathlete.

Breast cancer diagnosis: Jewett came inside after a run, was changing her clothes and discovered changes in her breast. She didn't think too much of it, as she had some benign breast issues previously.

"I always do monthly

self-exams, but, because of my age, hadn't begun any recommended yearly mammogram screenings yet," said Jewett, who was 39 at the time.

She went in for her annual physical, and the doctor said it was probably nothing. But Jewett was tested, returning a diagnosis of an invasive form of breast cancer.

Experience with breast cancer: Jewett found out she had a form of cancer caused by an overly aggressive expression of estrogen. Her treatment protocols included months of chemotherapy and radiation, as well as a medically induced



Courtesy photo

Newburyport's Laurie Jewett says that she has "more of an appreciation for just being" after surviving breast cancer.

menopause to keep the estrogen attack at bay.

"That's how my cancer was growing," she said.

The early onset of menopause also caused Jewett's body to behave as if it were much older, resulting in

issues such as arthritis.

After receiving an all-clear diagnosis, Jewett said that she needed a year of intravenous treatment and still goes in for injections every few months to basically keep the cancer "shut down."

"So, I'm still in treatment," she said.

What advice would you share with others?: "It is important to practice self-care and to do regular self-exams to keep track of any changes in your breasts," she said.

"I was very physical, running before, during and after, and still doing it. It was a key thing. You have to be healthy, you have to take care of yourself. It's not just an older woman's disease. It can affect younger women."

Jewett points out positive strides today, with more people taking care of themselves and more early detection. But 1 in 8 women will still get breast cancer.

"It has nothing to do with age, race or color. It's not going to go away, and early detection is key," she said. "Nothing is promised to us."

How has your cancer diagnosis changed you?: "Cancer rocks your world in a bad way, but I decided I've got no choice but to live," Jewett said.

"We are human. I look at everything differently than I have, I'm more self-aware, I have more of an appreciation for just being. Attitude is key."

Throughout her cancer treatment and still to this day, Jewett participates in the annual Tri for a Cure triathlon for women in South Portland, Maine.

"I do it every year, for six years straight, with my chemotherapy nurse," she said.

"I did it while I was sick. I swam with survivors. I am hoping to bring something like this to Massachusetts and New Hampshire."

Jewett said that when she first heard that she had cancer, it was the worst news. And hearing her cancer was gone was the best.

"I've got no choice but to live," she said. "You are not concerned about time, and I've been given a new opportunity."

Dedicated to the cause

Amesbury's Helen Nadeau takes no breaks from fundraising

By JACK SHEA

JSHEA@NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

When Helen Nadeau was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998, she was "young and scared" and hoped to simply watch her two teenage daughters become adults.

Luckily, Nadeau, now a 64-year-old Amesbury resident, was surrounded by family and friends who gave her the kindness and support she needed to make it through.

Since then, Nadeau has been active in raising money to help those facing the disease. Every year since 2006, she and her daughter Lisa Nadeau Turner have participated in the Susan G. Komen 3-Day 60-mile walk.

The event has been held in 14 U.S. cities over the years, including Boston, and Nadeau and Turner have also traveled to Florida, Washington, California and Illinois to take part.

"I want to help the cause," Nadeau said. "Everybody was so good to me when I had breast cancer that I had to give back."

She admits that it took some prodding from her daughter for her to get involved in the walk initially. "She said, 'If you can live through breast cancer, you can walk,' so I said, 'All right,'" Nadeau said.

Together, the duo has raised thousands of dollars annually for breast

cancer research, both of them reaching each walk's \$2,300-per-person fundraising minimum with the help of generous family, friends and community members.

"It's been a good bonding experience for us, too," Nadeau said.

This year's walk would have been Nadeau's 15th if not for its cancellation due to COVID-19, but she has already raised \$1,000 for the 2021 Boston walk.

Additionally, Nadeau has also helped provide emotional support to friends and others in the region who are battling the disease.

"I was just sharing all the information I know about how to get through it,"

Nadeau said.

Turner highlights her mother's supportive and giving nature, which she said shows through her work as secretary for Amesbury Elementary School.

"She's a great mom and she's always helping people, including all the kids at the school," Turner said. "Since she's had breast cancer, almost anyone she knows that has been diagnosed, she always reaches out and sends them cards ... any little thing to guide them through."

All of the generosity seems to come naturally for Nadeau, who said that supporting people with cancer is now a big part of her life.

"I'll always give to breast



Courtesy photo

Breast cancer survivor Helen Nadeau, left, and her daughter Lisa Nadeau Turner have completed 14 Susan G. Komen 3-Day 60-mile walks to raise money for research, education and treatment.

cancer and for cancer," she said. "It's just a priority for me."

Nadeau adds that she hopes to give others hope through her efforts.

"The word 'cancer' is very scary to all of us, but together, we can get through it," Nadeau said.

"Every day is a gift. Enjoy the moment."

Operation pink lobster

Gloucester fishing family's breast cancer experience gives rise to benefit T-shirt

By BILL KIRK
BKIRK@NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

As the daughter of a Gloucester fisherman, it wasn't too much of a reach for Enza Iacono to launch a business called Lobster Trap Gifts.

Working in her garage and selling her work online, Iacono, 45, turns brightly colored, coated wire trap material into all sorts of nautical decor — from wine bottle totes to salt-and-pepper shakers.

Since she started her business, however, Iacono's range has expanded. Now she sells hats emblazoned with a variety of ocean-related subjects, such as her trademark red lobster. She also sells other merchandise, such as key

chains, sail bags, dog collars and even personal protective equipment masks with a red lobster on the front.

Last year, she offered a product that held much more meaning to her and her family — T-shirts with pink lobsters on them.

Her mother, Anna Sanfilippo, 78, is a breast cancer survivor. Diagnosed with the disease in 2002, she was treated at Lahey Health Cancer Institute in Burlington. She underwent a mastectomy and has been cancer-free ever since.

But the experience made a big impact on Iacono, her five older brothers and her father, retired fisherman Nick Sanfilippo.

"It was a tough time," Iacono said. "I wish I could

have put myself in her shoes. It was awful."

Iacono said her mother and father went to Florida earlier that winter. When she had a mammogram, Iacono said, "that's when they saw it. She thought she was fine, but when she came home, she wasn't fine. She had a lumpectomy first, then a mastectomy."

Much of the caregiving fell to Iacono.

"As the only girl in the family, I had to help out," she said.

As with her other products, the breast cancer awareness T-shirts feature lobsters. But instead of just one lobster, two strategically placed pink crustaceans adorn the front of these Tps.

Under the lobsters, in big,



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Breast cancer survivor Anna Sanfilippo, left, and her daughter, Enza Iacono, standing in front of their family's commercial fishing boat, model the Breast Cancer Awareness T-shirts that Iacono sells through her Lobster Trap Gifts to raise money for Lahey Health Cancer Institute in Burlington.

pink letters, are the words "BITE CANCER," followed by a pink ribbon.

"Our pink lobsters don't just want to fight cancer; they want to bite it and destroy it once and for all," Iacono says on her website. "Let's keep fighting to find a cure."

Iacono sells the shirts for \$20 each, with all proceeds

going to the Lahey Health Cancer Institute, which Iacono praises for its excellent care of her mother.

While she sold only a handful of the Breast Cancer Awareness Month Tata T-shirts last year, Iacono hopes this year to generate more attention for them and the cause they support.

But she's also quite

generous with the T-shirts.

"If I hear of someone who has breast cancer, I give it to them, or mail it to them, to help them smile in a hard time," Iacono said. "Anything I can do to uplift their spirits."

For more information on Lobster Trap Gifts' breast cancer awareness shirts, check out lobstertrapgifts.com.

'One less thing to worry about'

Mother of survivor touts scalp hypothermia to prevent hair loss

By MICHAEL CRONIN
MCRONIN@
NORTHOFBOSTON.COM

Eva Korpi, of Rockport, recalls that her daughter had a lot of fears after being diagnosed with what was an aggressive form of breast cancer in 2016.

One of her biggest concerns was facing the loss of her hair, Korpi said.

For many, the trauma of hair loss while undergoing cancer treatments can be immeasurable.

"It's kind of a mark of breast cancer, and it wasn't something I wanted people to know about or have people worry for me," Korpi's daughter, Anna Quigley, said. "I just wanted to go out and be myself. I also work with children with autism and severe issues, and I didn't



Eva Korpi, of Rockport, holds a photo of her flanked by her daughters, Anna Quigley, right, and Karin Koga.

want to scare a child or have them not recognize me."

Korpi said her daughter spent a lot of time researching various treatments in hopes of minimizing the trauma of hair loss.

Through her research, Quigley, who now lives in Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C., discovered scalp hypothermia.

The therapy involves patients wearing caps frozen with liquid nitrogen during chemotherapy treatments to prevent hair loss.

"It was a fairly new concept back in 2016," Quigley said. "People hadn't really heard of it. When I went to my oncologist, she tried to talk me out of it, but my surgeon said, 'Why not? Let's give it a try.'"

Quigley would bring heavy coolers filled with Penguin Cold Caps every time she went for a round of chemo, which was about two to three times a week from October 2016 to January 2017. She credits these caps — which can be rented on a monthly basis for \$449 a month, according to the Penguin Cold Cap website — for keeping 50% to 60% of her hair in tact.

"Having my hair was a good thing (through

the chemo treatments)," Quigley said. "It was one less thing to worry about. There's a bonus, too. All day long (during treatments), you're sitting in this awful, tragic place. The cold cap kind of numbs your brain to the point where you don't know what's going on. It really soothed me."

She said her oncologist came to recognize the benefits as well.

"My oncologist looked at me and said, 'I'm sorry, I was wrong,'" Quigley said.

Today, hospitals, including the one where Quigley was treated, are installing in-house scalp-cooling machines that tout even higher success rates of preventing chemo-related hair loss.

The DigniCap, developed by Swedish medical technology company Dignitana, is



MICHAEL CRONIN/Staff photos

Eva Korpi hopes to see scalp hypothermia systems like her daughter utilized become more readily available so breast cancer patients can worry less about losing their hair during chemotherapy treatments.

a large cooling cap machine designed for hospital use only. Both of its models have been certified by the Food and Drug Administration and are available at select hospitals across the country.

The Paxman Scalp Cooling System, which has also been cleared by the FDA, is available at many of the major hospitals in Massachusetts as well as New Hampshire.

Now going on four years cancer-free, Quigley said she hopes to get scalp-cooling therapies more readily available for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy across the nation.

It's something her mother believes strongly in, too.

"I really want to be an advocate for people going through it just to help them understand (what's available)," Quigley said.



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