

Breast Cancer Survivor Inspires Daughter to Raise Funds



A routine mammogram was all it took to alert Kathy Romine and her medical team to the presence of cancer lurking in one of her breasts. With a history of the disease on both sides of her family, Romine, 49, had begun receiving the annual screenings at the age of

40. She immediately consulted with a breast surgeon and soldiered through multiple surgeries and six months of chemotherapy, all while continuing to work as a sales representative for a large corporation. “I just barreled through it,” recalls Romine.

Breast cancer is often a silent disease, with virtually no symptoms, but it is often completely curable if diagnosed in its early stages. In 1980, the national five-year survival rate for women diagnosed with early stage breast cancer was about 74%; today that number is 99%. There are currently more than 3.1 million breast cancer survivors in the United States. One out of eight women will develop breast cancer, yet about 85% of these women have no family history of the disease.

According to the New Jersey Department of Health, breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed among New Jersey women and the second leading cause of death, after lung cancer, attributed to cancer in the state. In 2015, 7,584 New Jersey women were diagnosed with breast cancer. The rate at which new cases of breast cancer are being diagnosed in Sussex County, as well as in the rest of the state, is stable, according to the National Cancer Institute and the Centers for Disease Control. The county’s breast cancer death rate is also falling, in accordance with state and national trends. However, the disease contributes to the death of 1,300 New Jersey women annually. Access to breast cancer screenings and optimal treatments is an urgent public health issue.

A mother of two teens at the time, Romine refused to allow her situation to keep her from fully engaging in her life. She participated in college tours with her daughter, then a high school senior, and attended both of her children’s sporting events alongside her husband, Tom. She wore a ball cap on her bald head at her daughter’s high school graduation, and even participated in a friendly rivalry with a male co-worker, asking customers to rate which person had the most hair. Friends made meals for the family while her husband attended to the needs of the children. “I tried to stay positive the whole time. Life goes on and I stuck with it.”

Romine is particularly proud of the impact her diagnosis and treatment had on her daughter Claire who organized a 5K run at Sparta High School while Romine was undergoing treatment, raising \$3,000 for the American Cancer Society. Claire Romine continued to raise funds for cancer research while attending the University of Delaware, and recently completed a run across the United States for the Ulman Foundation 4K for Cancer, finishing as the top fundraiser and contributing more than \$16,000 to the organization which supports young adults with cancer.

“The moral of my story is ‘Get your mammogram,’” states Romine. “I am a big believer in annual screenings, because I had no symptoms. Do whatever you can to catch it early. It’s treatable. We have come so far. We are learning all the time about how to deal with it.”

Breast Cancer Survivors Invited to Unique Celebration

Project Self-Sufficiency will host a unique celebration of life for breast cancer survivors on Saturday, May 18th, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The Survivor Celebration will feature break-out sessions, entertainment, lunch, music and interactive exhibits. The celebration is free; space is limited, and registration is required. Interested participants must call Project Self-Sufficiency at 973-940-3500 or 844-807-3500 to register.

