

Local Businesswomen Endorses Mammograms Save Lives Campaign



Ginny Smith never thought that she would be the one. After all, her husband, Keith, had already cared for, nursed and ultimately lost one wife to cancer. Surely, he would not have the misfortune of having to relive that experience. Then in May, 2007, at the age of 45, Ginny had a routine mammogram. “That mammogram saved my life,” declares Ginny.

Two different types of cancer were detected and Ginny embarked on a journey which would ultimately take her to Manhattan for surgery, followed by months of chemotherapy.

Because Ginny’s cancer was detected at the least severe Stage One, she had more options for surgery and follow-up chemotherapy than many patients who wait too long before they seek a mammogram. Ginny’s early diagnosis also gave her the option of pursuing a type of chemotherapy which did not result in hair loss. “I didn’t lose my hair and that is the one thing that I would like to share with people which would be helpful. I had a low risk of reoccurrence because my cancer was Stage One. The type of chemo I was given was a more tolerable drug which did not make my hair fall out. I was able to go through my life and not be reminded every minute that I had cancer. There were a lot of people who did not even know that I had cancer. For me, chemo was not horrible.”

The mother of two young girls, Ginny threw herself into coordinating family outings and birthday parties as a means of distracting herself from her battle with cancer. Medical visits to New York City were expanded into family excursions to museums, Broadway shows and other fun activities.

Early in her marriage one of Ginny’s first projects with her new business, Rainbow Press, was to publish “Mourning Sickness, “a book written by her husband, Keith Smith, now the Dean of Liberal Arts at the County College of Morris, about the process of moving on after the death of a spouse. The fact that Keith had already experienced the loss of a spouse actually strengthened Ginny’s faith, “I figured that God couldn’t possibly do that to him twice. We hung strong with great hope, and we did everything we could to get rid of it and move on.”

Ginny Smith’s sister had breast cancer, but the majority of women who contract the disease have no family history, making it all the more important for women to get an annual mammogram. Project Self-Sufficiency, in conjunction with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure North Jersey®, Intercar Mercedes Benz,

Sussex Honda, the New Jersey Herald, and the Sussex County Cancer Coalition have sponsored a campaign, “Mammograms Save Lives,” to underscore the importance of annual mammograms to the residents of Sussex County. Sussex County has the highest incidence of incurable diagnoses of breast cancer in the state. In fact, while the mortality rate for breast cancer in the state of New Jersey dropped -8.9% from 1997 to 2005, mortality in Sussex County rose +9.5% during the same period. Although the reasons for this disparity can be complicated, one fact is crystal clear to the Sussex County Breast Health Task Force. Early diagnosis is the key to a cure, and urging women to get a mammogram can be the difference between life and death.

Uninsured and underinsured women over the age of 40 who reside in Sussex County are invited to receive a free mammogram at Project Self-Sufficiency, thanks to the support of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure North Jersey®. Interested women are encouraged to call the agency at 973-940-3500 for more information.

Now cancer free, Ginny is refocused on work and family. She is expanding the website for her business, and looking into other partnering ventures. Her children and her marriage are thriving. In fact, some of Keith’s artwork is now available for sale on the Rainbow Press website, and a portion of the proceeds has been earmarked for the mammogram fund at Project Self-Sufficiency. “There is so much hope now,” notes Ginny. “Mammograms are a slight inconvenience, but if you want to live your life regret-free you will choose to have one. We women simply must put preventative care at the top of the list of things we do for ourselves and our families.”

Free mammograms are offered frequently to uninsured and underinsured women over the age of 40 at Project Self-Sufficiency. The next available date for a free mammogram is Thursday, October 7th, from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Interested women are encouraged to call the agency at 973-940-3500 to make an appointment. In addition, Newton Memorial Hospital will provide a free mammogram for women who qualify through the Newton Memorial Hospital Foundation’s “Mammograms Save Lives” program. Those without health insurance are encouraged to contact Newton Memorial Hospital’s Education/Outreach office at 973-579-8340 for more information.

