

April 2011 three of my co-workers were diagnosed with breast cancer within 10 days of each other and I supported them through their journey. Little did I know 8 months later I would be diagnosed with breast cancer. The support I received was amazing. I was fortunate that I was a Stage "0". I didn't even know there was a Stage "0". I was told that unless something was found in my lymph nodes, I would only need a mastectomy.

On 2-9-2012 I held hands with my husband, my 3 children and 3 of my best friends while we said the Lords prayer before I went into surgery for my mastectomy. I felt an incredible sense of peace. I knew that I would be alright, no matter what the outcome was. The procedure I chose was a Tram Flap- they used my belly fat and a muscle from my abdomen to recreate my breast. Thankfully it had not spread to my lymph nodes so I did not need radiation. My breast was hard as a rock for about 6-8 weeks but now moves and is as soft as my other one. I do not have feeling on the outside of my breast, certain areas of my tummy and near my armpit & side area. I was blessed with 2 incredible surgeons. I trusted them with my life and they took very good care of me.

There really was no support group that I knew of for women my age. I had heard of Linked by Pink but I knew it was for younger women. About 2 ½ years after my surgery, my friend Jan approached me and asked me if I was interested in attending a meeting. It was the best decision I ever made. I met some incredible & truly amazing women of all ages. I have learned so much from each and every one of them. I was unaware that even women with Stage 0 have had it return. I love that we have our own Facebook page where we can share things and ask questions that we cannot ask anyone else. I love that LBP empowers all of us to fight for what we deserve in the medical community. I truly love the activities and meetings where we get time to share with each other.

I am sad to say that since my diagnosis 2 out of the 4 of my co-workers have passed away- BUT I can also say that 2 out of the 4 of us are doing well. I try to help everyone who has followed in my footsteps by making chemo caps, port pillows & homemade soup to comfort them. I figure something so little can make their day a little brighter. I thank God for each one of the Linked By Pink girls and especially Norma and Becky who lead this amazing group. God bless LBP. Much Love, Rose

~ Rose Tarquinio  
Erie, PA