

March 26, 2006

To all the volunteers at From Our Hearts, Inc.,

I am writing this letter to thank you all for the wonderful event you hosted on March 18, the 2006 "Breast Fest". This is the first time I have been able to participate, and I think I just need to share with you all what a wonderful day this was for me and my husband, how much of a personal celebration the day has become, and how much your work is appreciated.

It was just about a year ago, March of 2005, that my mammogram screenings first showed signs of possible breast cancer. I was diagnosed with DCIS breast cancer in April, which was followed by a lumpectomy and then a complete radiation series of 33 treatments. Just about the time I was finishing up the treatments in mid-August for my left breast, I went for a follow-up mammogram on my right breast, as they had been keeping watch on a vague gray area, which had been there awhile but there had been no changes and no signs of cancer. Just because of my most recent cancer episode, the suggestion was made by the radiology lab doctor that I should have a breast biopsy on this second side as well. Good thing someone was watching out for me, because there was a cancerous tumor, hidden behind a cyst so deep inside my breast that none of the screenings had shown well enough for it to be suspicious. Just two days after I finished radiation for the first breast cancer, I underwent a second lumpectomy on the other side. This time, the diagnosis was IDC, or invasive ductal cancer, but fortunately only what the doctors termed minimally invasive. Once I recovered from the second surgery, I once again was sent for yet another radiation series of 33 sessions, which was finally finished in mid-November.

Nobody ever expects or wants to hear a cancer diagnosis of any kind, and certainly not twice. But I was extremely lucky, and I know it. Had it not been for the first cancer, and very watchful doctors at the radiology lab, the 2nd cancer episode may have become much worse before it was found. As it turned out, both cancers were found very early, the treatments were successful, and I am on the road to recovery.

Now, as to the reason the "Breast Fest" was so important to me: I had my first set of follow-up mammograms and ultrasounds at the end of this past February. Because of so much scar tissue, the screenings could not define some of the areas clearly, so I was scheduled for a breast MRI on March 15. I got the results back on March 16, and the MRI showed no signs of cancer anymore – everything was clean and clear. Oh Happy Day!!!

So this event, "Breast Fest", on March 18, 2006, has begun a time of celebration, and counting the years as a breast cancer survivor. I wasn't sure I could do it, but the euphoric adrenalin rush from getting good news only two days before the event, is what gave me the energy to walk (and finish!) the entire 5K walk. It's very hard for me to describe the peace and camaraderie I felt early in the morning of the event, as there I was in my pink survivor's t-shirt, holding hands, hugging, and celebrating life with all the other survivors, with so many of our family and friends behind us. We understood each other completely, even though most of us were strangers. Thank you for arranging that beautiful ceremony.

I know this letter has gotten very long, but it's important that I share a little bit more. I walked with the Pine Island Garden Club team, many members of which have been my support group for the last year. One of the members, Gay Thompson, did something very special for me at the end of last week's walk. She had finished her walk in the front of the group, and by now I was almost at the back. Gay got a ride back on one of the golf carts, and met up with me, my husband and Carlene, just so that she could walk the last few blocks with me, cross over the finish line and celebrate with me – a very special moment indeed.

So, once again, I would like to thank all of you for caring enough to form this organization, and to have an event called "Breast Fest". I also would like to thank one of your members, Carlene Sharples, who, when my energy was fading, stayed with me and walked with me the 2nd half of the walk, making sure I was okay, and asking one of the men driving the golf carts to come back and check on us occasionally. My husband was also walking with me, so with the two of them keeping me going, and also Gay returning to walk in with us, I really wanted to complete the walk, and cross over that finish line. I did and I got my pink rose. We also enjoyed spending the afternoon at the event. It was a marvelous day, very well organized, and lots of fun.

I am ready to enjoy freedom again, and treasure each and every day that I am blessed to live on this earth. My husband and I plan on celebrating life and walking in the Breast Fest on Pine Island for many years to come. Thank you again.

Sincerely,



Bonnie J. Kellen
4111 Galt Island Avenue
St. James City FL 33956
239-283-8677
Email: mobilemap@comcast.net