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Changing the Trend: Part I...Let's Start a New Movement

By Julia Chiappetta



Ten years ago, after a diagnosis of breast cancer and an ensuing cancer journey, which ultimately, and fortunately, have led to healing and recovery, an idea blossomed in my heart.

The idea evolved as I ventured out to share my own cancer journey and met so many people struggling with their own cancer, their finances and desperate for glimpses of their former lives. At the heart of this project was, and is, the desire to find ways to reinvent the thinking behind raising funds and to visualize new paths, allowing more of the resources and funding already available to quickly find its way to a new source—real people in the critical care stage of a cancer diagnosis.

It would bring to them a package of education, financial and emotional support, wrapped with encouragement and comfort.

A few statistics:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in April 2003 that cancer rates could further increase by 50% to 15 million new cases in the year 2020.

- The Breast Cancer Fund, San Francisco, Ca., reports an estimated 3 million women and men in the U.S. are living with breast cancer today. Two million have been diagnosed and one million have the disease, but do not know yet.

If we take only the 2 million with active breast cancer and consider the various organizations providing care/case management, they say that the most critical needs are financial and emotional. Some of those cases look like this:

- A woman whose husband just walked out because he can't deal with her cancer or vice versa and the one left is facing it all alone.

- A single parent, so ill from disease/treatments, worried about how he or she will make dinner, do homework with kids and make it to the next day.

- A business person, on the verge of losing a job due to days away from the office and now feeling the financial squeeze, all while trying to get well.

The large global non-profits are producing and raising millions from runs, walks, star powered galas, fashion shows and online campaigns. While all of these are good, my heart is filled with hope to try and find ways to designate some of

those millions to the real people, crying out for help, right now!

Many cancer support organizations aim to provide immediate support to those with cancer and to fight the “war on cancer” through raising funds for research.

At present, it seems a bit lopsided to me, for I see a vast majority of funds going to research. My hope is that we are able to find ways to balance that out.

Back to the critical phase, when one hears the words “you have cancer.” I hone in here because this is where your world stops, where you realize the need to vacate your life, spend hours on research, meet with doctors and make decisions to implement your plan of care for healing. It is here where it becomes complex, confusing and causes major disruption to every aspect of daily life and everyone in it, including family members, friends and colleagues.

One organization doing amazing work during the critical phase is The Pink Fund, founded by the very cool, Molly MacDonald. This once grassroots organization, in Michigan, is now national, thanks in part to a partnership with The Ford Motor Company, Warriors in Pink Campaign, and is doing God's work every day, paying bills for those coming through their program and vetting process. This allows those with cancer and in treatment,

assistance with financial burdens and relief to heal and regain their footing.

For Molly and her team, the requests far outweigh available, donated funds, and this confirms my belief that the needs are great and although solutions may seem daunting, they are not impossible.

I say...

Let's Change the Trend

Let's Start a New Movement

Let's Invest in People

Let's Find Gumption to Reroute Resources

Let's Be on a Rampage for Health & Healing

Stay tuned for Part Two.

As always, try to drink something organic and green, make one healthy change to your diet, perhaps do something generous under the radar, engage in physical activity, enjoy getting to bed way before midnight when the best sleep occurs, surprise an elderly family member or neighbor with a visit and try to be present and active in showing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Julia Chiappetta is the author of “Breast Cancer: The Notebook” (Gemini Media, 2006) and is also the owner of Julia Chiappetta Consulting. She lives in Cos Cob. More information and past columns can be found at JuliaChiappetta.com

