

Don't Take for Granted a Critical, Local Resource for Cancer Survivors

When thinking about my cancer journey, two songs come to mind: The Grateful Dead's Truckin' ("...what a long strange trip it's been...") and Johnny Cash's I've Been Everywhere.

I've had many treatments in a number of hospitals, but I've encountered just one organization like the Cancer Support Community Greater Philadelphia.

Most people, and unfortunately many doctors, can't imagine people with cancer in their 30s. It became my reality when I was told of my Hodgkin's lymphoma diagnosis the day after Thanksgiving in 2000.

I'd been sick for about two years with high fevers, night sweats, fatigue, coughing, and eventually itchy skin. Symptoms initially came and went like clockwork but later came and didn't go away. I'd been too ill to work for three months when I finally got the news at the age of 34.

I had so much going on. I recently graduated law school, I worked in government, I was married, our daughter was two, and we'd only been in our first house for four years. No one wants to hear they have cancer, but I was relieved we finally knew what was wrong with me and treatments were available.

My journey then started and thankfully ended on a high note at a much later time in a place far away—my apparent cure. Along the way, I was treated by five doctors for cancer and my treatment's side effects in six hospitals, in four cities, in three states. I was treated with 16 chemo drugs, radiation, surgeries, and two types of transplants.

Just after my initial diagnosis, a doctor from my local practice told me that, if I was going to get cancer, Hodgkin's was the one to get because it was so treatable. A little more than two years later, another doctor at a cancer center told me Hodgkin's lymphoma was going to kill me and there was nothing I could do about it (though I might "get lucky" with a new drug they were testing). I was 37, and my daughter was four.

Despite his advice to stop treatment, I continued. I've been in remission number three since March 2003. We moved from my home state of Connecticut to Pennsylvania in 2004, when I started attending support groups at what was then Gilda's Club

Delaware Valley in Warminster. In all those hospitals, there was virtually no emotional support or educational programs. Social workers were few, underpaid, and overworked.



You can lose a lot when you're fighting cancer. It could be your life, job, financial security, marriage, or your marbles. The Cancer Support Community Greater Philadelphia helps you stay sane in an insane time because you can talk about what you're enduring and hear from others traveling the same path.

You feel powerless when dealing with cancer. But, when you give advice and support to others in need, you feel powerful because you're helping them, even in a small way.

When that happens, you feel something good has come out of the worst thing to ever happen to you.

Don't go through cancer alone. The Cancer Support Community Greater Philadelphia covers the region through in-person and online support and educational groups for cancer survivors, their families, and friends. Call them today at 215-879-7733.



**CANCER SUPPORT
COMMUNITY™**

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CSCGP
at Gilda's Club

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