

INTRODUCING



On the next few pages, you will find a new regular feature we will include in many upcoming issues of *Next Door Neighbors*: GUEST SPEAKER. The vision for this feature is to give someone who has first-hand experience or knowledge about a topic to share their insight with readers - much like a guest speaker would at a civic group meeting.

We will select individuals who will share their knowledge about topics that have a broad general interest - ones where there may be the opportunity to learn more on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Terri Harris is our first GUEST SPEAKER. She is a Williamsburg resident who was diagnosed with invasive breast cancer at age 42.

Many of us have been affected by breast cancer - a personal experience, a family member or a friend. According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight women are at risk for developing breast cancer. (www.cancer.org)

In this interview, we asked Terri what a breast cancer survivor goes through with that diagnosis and what views she might be able to share about her cancer that could benefit others. NDN



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"I retired from the Navy in 1965, and we moved to Norfolk where I taught mathematics for 12 years and was very involved in organizations that support education. When it came time for us to simplify our life, Chambrel was an easy choice for us. As you might expect, the transition was not hard at all. We love the people here. The people and the staff are all wonderful. It's home away from home. While we still have friends all over the world from our travels in the Navy, we also enjoy our many friends and neighbors right down the hall at Chambrel."

- Captain Robert Hailey and his wife, Evelyn -

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TERRI HARRIS



As a member of Beyond Boobs, Inc.*, you must have been diagnosed with breast cancer at a fairly early age. When did you find out you had breast cancer and how did that come about?

I had been having mammograms since about age 35. I had dense breast tissue so starting at age 38 my doctor started watching a "calcification" and saw me every 6 months for 1 ½ years. After three visits it was determined that there was no change and I was told to come back in another year. I went back a year later and found out I had a tumor. I was 42 years old. I never felt it myself. It was discovered with a mammogram!

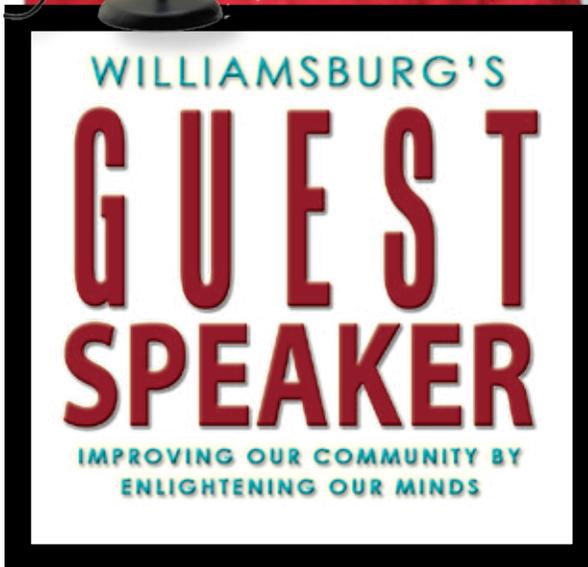
What was the first thing that came

across your mind when you were told you had breast cancer?

I didn't want to die! I hate to say that, but it's true. I felt selfish and wanted to live – more for my girls than me!

It is impossible for those of us who have never been diagnosed with breast cancer to understand the emotions that go with that diagnosis, yet we know it could happen to us one day. What was your attitude toward the news immediately after learning about it and how did it evolve over time?

I can't imagine one can have the same emotions until having gone through it. I believe you can sympathize with someone, but not completely understand. I said during those 6 month visits that I knew this would come back and kick me in the butt – kinda joking



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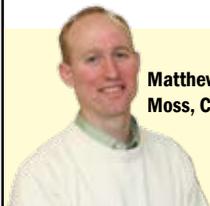
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about it but not really giving it much thought. So when it did, I was taken aback! I never let it get me down. I fought it straight on!! I was definitely scared and had my shower cry a time or two but dealt with it. Knowing the facts of my cancer seemed to help – knowing what I was in for.

What are your personal thoughts about the need for women to have regular mammograms and do self examinations?

I am a true believer in mammograms. I honestly feel I would be dead now – or soon – if not for mammograms. I never felt the lump myself and if I had waited until age 50 to have a mammogram it would have been too late!

What would you say to a woman who is noticing a small lump or other change in her breast and who has not seen a doctor due to fear or denial?

See your doctor immediately! Ignorance doesn't change a thing! Knowledge is power and the ability to fight breast cancer early on is a

gift! The earlier the better!!

How has the organization, Beyond Boobs, helped you?

These women are great. The compassion, the knowledge, the strength I feel just knowing them and being a part of them has helped me more than I can even imagine. It also gives me a venue in which to encourage early detection and breast health! As soon as I was diagnosed, before I even met MaryBeth [Gibson] and Rene [Bowditch] [founders of Beyond Boobs, Inc.], I was an outspoken advocate for early detection – GET YOUR MAMMOGRAMS! These ladies have allowed me to continue that message in a positive way.

Has having breast cancer helped you be more supportive or available to others who are going through the same thing? How?

Most definitely! Hardly a week goes by that I don't speak with a newly diagnosed woman or a family member seeking information and support. I offer my time to help if I can, if that

means just listening, going to doctor appointments or buying things they might need – whatever the situation requires.

What is the current status of your breast cancer? Are you currently getting treatment? Is it in remission?

I think I am CURED! But, of course, it is CANCER. One really never knows and it is a constant reminder of anything can happen. Just today I had a CT (CAT scan) from head to pelvic area because of headaches and lower back pain. I truly feel that all is OK. I find myself self-diagnosing myself with cancer with every ache and pain – if only for a moment. Then the realization sets in that it's probably just a headache a lower back ache! You still can't get away from the thought of "what if", however.

How has your breast cancer affected your family?

It has made them stronger! They are more compassionate towards others too. I think we are almost back to normal but I can't imagine not having

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had the strong support base from my friends and family. They are all great supporters of Beyond Boobs! Inc. and I love them for that.

Has breast cancer impacted any of your friendships or other relationships - either positively or negatively?

I have to say that breast cancer only strengthened all of my relationships. My husband, Allen, is a gift. My daughters, show signs of my courage (which is what I wanted), and my parents are wonderful! My friends and family all wrapped their arms around us and never let go! That continues to this day!

What has been the toughest thing about having breast cancer?

Everyday...thinking about it! Worrying if it will re-occur. It doesn't stop my life, but it is the worst part!

What is your long term prognosis?

GREAT!

Has having cancer changed the way you think about life in general? In what ways?

No, not really. I have to say that I have always lived life to the fullest and only continue to do that. I truly love life and all that it brings.

What makes you most happy in your life today?

MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS! And, of course, not having cancer.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

My youngest daughter, Maggie, will be in college. I can envision my husband and me doing a lot more traveling. I'm not sure how that will be possible as much as we go now, but I'm sure we'll figure out a way. I want to watch my family thrive - my oldest daughter, Randi and her husband, Christian, and granddaughter Ellie. I want to see Maggie in college and my parents enjoying their retirement.

If you had the ability to sit down face-to-face and have a cup of coffee with everyone who reads this article, what would you say to them in regards to what you have learned from having breast cancer?

Love life. It's shorter than you think! Don't be too judgmental! Embrace your family and friends and don't be afraid to let them help. We can all be supportive of each other in one way or another. NDN

* ABOUT BEYOND BOOBS, INC.

It's one of the most exclusive clubs around—and it's one nobody wants to join. The qualifications for membership are simple: You must be a survivor of breast cancer and you must be young (diagnosed before menopause.) They came together for the first time as an official group in late 2006 . . . **To continue reading and to find out more, visit: www.beyondboobsinc.org/about**

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