

I would like to welcome all of you to the 9th Annual Survivors' Parade.

I still remember my first parade and my first thought, when I looked around at all the women and one gentlemen in their cowboy hats and pink shirts, was that they knew exactly what I had been through.

I watched as women saw someone from a previous parade and embraced them like you would a family member. There were tears of course both of joy and sorrow but I saw mostly smiles.

The organizers asked us to all find the sign that showed the years that you had been a survivor and fall in behind the person holding the sign. I found a spot in the 0-5 years and there were a lot of us. Then we were escorted up to the third floor to get ready to come down the escalators. As I watched the women that had survived 6 to 10 years and then the women that were in the 11 + group pass by me I thought for the first time in my life I wanted to be at the end of the line.

It gave me hope to see these women. I am sure that you all noticed that there is a 15 plus group this year which makes me very happy.

A few years back I was asked to come up with a quote for Breast Cancer Awareness month. My quote was "Breast Cancer does not discriminate - who has it touched in your life?".

I would like to ask all of you to look around and see the women you are standing near and know that each one of them heard the same words you have heard "You have Breast Cancer". Each one of us deals with those words differently but we all end up hoping that the cancer will soon be gone and we can be healthy again.'

We also hope that no one else has to go through what we have been through.

You should also know that you are not alone. The people around you are part of a unique community and each one of them will help you if you need help.

When you are diagnosed with breast cancer the one startling reality is that this changes everything beyond a shadow of doubt and permanently, in ways both subtle and significant. You embark on one of life's most profound journeys.

I came into this world bald but little did I know that I would be bald again not once but twice more.

I was first diagnosed in 2000 with breast cancer. My father had recently passed away two weeks after being diagnosed with cancer and that was fresh in my mind. All I could think of when my doctor told me I had breast cancer was that I had two weeks to live. I remember thinking I did not want to die and I wanted to grab and hold tight to my husband Doug and be with my family.

I went through surgery, half a year of chemotherapy and one month of radiation

After I went through treatment I really wanted to help other people going through treatment and so I went from patient to counsellor. I think that all of us do that. I also started to volunteer for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation because I truly believe in their vision of a future without breast cancer.

Then in 2007, in the same month that I was diagnosed before, I was told that I had cancer again. The shock is still the same but you have different fears than you do the first time you hear those words. I had to go through surgery and much stronger



chemotherapy again but this time there would be no radiation.

Well, already there was a plus. I did have a surgery in 2008 but the results were benign.

I think that as focused as I was on beating cancer my family and friends had it harder. How much more difficult it must be for them to just watch and wait, offering support and encouragement but helpless to carry any more of the burden than that. But, to me what they did helped me win and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

As a friend Noel's Mom said "Breast cancer is like a house on fire. You're on the inside of the house fighting the fire from the inside, but we're on the outside of the house, fighting the fire from the outside.

When I was writing this speech I kept thinking to myself that I would love if someone would come up with a different word than survivor. So I went on line and started looking for a word. I found the word thriver. The definition was to realize a goal despite or because of circumstances or to be healthy or well - to flourish. I think I really like that word and I am going to start referring to myself as a thriver.

I truly hope that one day in the near future we will live in a world without breast cancer.

In closing I want to tell you about Marge who was one of my best friends and always would help anyone. She passed away recently and at her funeral she requested that everyone do something for her. I will tell you that everyone at her funeral did what she asked including the minister who was not so sure about what she was requesting.

If you are willing I would like to ask you all to join me in her wish. She wanted everyone at the funeral to yell at the top of their lungs so that all those that had passed and the people that were still here would hear these words So on the count of three I would like all of you to raise your flower to all those that have passed and for all those around you to say "LIVE LIFE".

123 LIVE LIFE