

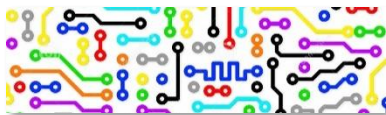


# zoom meeting

By Marcia Gurche

Thanks to all those who joined in on May 14<sup>th</sup> as we held our first official *One to One* Support Group meeting via Zoom. We had 21 ladies attend the online gathering and **Marilyn Brozovic** not only hosted it, but she sent out the invitations and did a great job with all of the technical aspects of putting the meeting together and seeing it through. We are so grateful for her leadership always, but especially during this time of turmoil and change.

It was wonderful to be able to see everyone and we were privileged to be joined by two wonderful guests, **Lisa D'Andrea**, RN and **Kim Rownd**, RN, who are both oncology nurses from the Survivorship Clinic at the Wilson Cancer Center at Troy Beaumont. Both Lisa and Kim have offered their services to our ladies if they would like to call them for support at any time. Please reach out to Marilyn (phone: **248-561-2027**, email: **brozovicm87@gmail.com**) for their contact information.



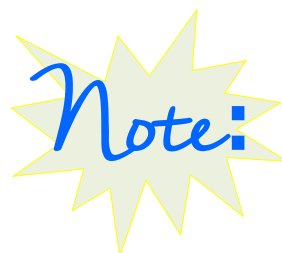
*One to One* is devoted to the on-going support of those newly diagnosed, those in remission and those in recurrence.

100% of contributions directly benefit our group by providing activities and paying for expenses.

Donations are gratefully accepted and can be made by check payable to **One to One Ovarian Cancer Support Group** c/o Marilyn Brozovic  
4793 Alton Dr.  
Troy, MI 48085

A receipt will be provided for tax purposes.

A special thank you to **Patty Kurpinski** for keeping up with all the latest on the ovarian cancer front in order to continue supporting those in treatment and to **Renee Machiniak**, for the emotional and spiritual support she is always willing to offer us. We are so blessed to have such a strong group of ladies in this group. We look forward to seeing even more of you at future Zoom meetings on the **second** and **fourth Thursdays** of each month at **4:30 pm**.



**An email will be sent to everyone two weeks prior to each video support group meeting asking if you would like to participate. A separate email with a link will be sent to those who reply two days prior to the meeting.**

# PROFILE IN *Courage*

This month we are happy to feature **Jennifer Murakami** in our newsletter. Jen is a new member of our One to One group, and she submitted her own story to us, which we are always thrilled to receive.

Jen is currently employed by Care of Southeastern Michigan, and as with so many people these days, she is working remotely in her capacity as a **peer recovery coach**. Jen's flexible schedule fits well with her busy family life, as she is also a wife and mother of three teenagers. It also allows her freedom to be creative and to continue her ongoing efforts of support for others facing challenges with addiction.

Jen met **Bill**, her husband of 17 years, when they were both working at TGI Friday's back in 1999. It may sound hokey, but they locked eyes and he told her "I'm going to marry you"... and he did!

Jen and Bill have three children who they enjoy immensely. **Jade**, 19, is in school with the goal of becoming a graphic designer. She has wanted to be an artist since the third grade and has never veered from that path. **Hunter**, 16, is an IT guru – something every family needs! Their youngest child, **Piper**, 13, is in the eighth grade and enjoys amateur photography and is anxiously awaiting the arrival of her first guitar from Amazon. All three of the children, as well as Bill and Jen, enjoy creative pursuits. The family likes to attend concerts and other family-oriented activities such as going to movies, fishing and taking walks at Stoney Creek.

Jen feels that her ovarian cancer diagnosis was somewhat of a blessing as it helped her to refocus her life. At the time she was diagnosed she was working three jobs, and she was extremely busy trying to keep a lot of balls in the air. While in treatment, she was forced to stay at home and she had time to write, and to think, and to let go of who she thought she was. Jen had time to reflect, and it helped her discover who she really was and her real purpose in life. While she has always thought of herself as a compassionate person, Jen feels that since she was diagnosed she has become much more caring and she discovered her innate "Pay It Forward" attitude.

A cancer diagnosis can often make a person hypersensitive to the world around her; in Jen's case, many people have benefited from her diagnosis, as she is **giving back** for all of the kindness shown to her and her family during the dark time in her life. Thank you, Jen, for sharing your story with us and for all you are doing to help others who are struggling.

**Here is Jen Murakami's story:**



It was November of 2017: Two days after I fell on my knees in desperation, asking for God to help me find meaning in my life, three days after Thanksgiving and six weeks post-op from my cholecystectomy. I was back in the emergency room.

I had lost almost 80 pounds in four months. I had been trying to lose weight with diet and exercise. For a while I thought, "Wow, this diet is amazing!" An array of symptoms began to manifest; I knew something was wrong.

I was exhausted all the time. Despite all of the weight loss, I had a rock-hard mass in my abdomen. I couldn't bend over without overwhelming pain. I was hoping I had an infection from my previous surgery. Who hopes for an infection?

*(Cont. 'd on next page)*

After an ultrasound and a CT scan, it was confirmed that there indeed was a mass that was pressing on my bowels. It was not there six weeks ago when I had surgery. I know this because after the cholecystectomy, the surgeon told me that he consulted an OB/GYN during the procedure. There was free fluid in my abdomen that looked like a ruptured ovarian cyst. They weren't worried. So, I wasn't either.

Within hours of the aforementioned diagnostics, I was getting prepped for surgery. I met with multiple doctors, including an oncologist who would also be my surgeon. She and I discussed what the outcome could be. She wanted to remove only my left ovary to conserve my fertility. I urged my new oncologist to take it all if needed; I was satisfied with the three beautiful children I was blessed with.



In the end, I had a radical hysterectomy with 75% omentum removal. And yes, it is cancer. Stage 1C -- a leaking tumor. I would need chemotherapy, Carboplatin and Taxol, every 21 days for 6 rounds, from January until April 2018. Chemotherapy was brutal. I was one of those who was too ill to work. My husband and I were barely scraping by as it was. Yet something amazing happened. People from all over Macomb County set up a fundraiser for our family. We were able to stay afloat until I could work again.

This outpouring of love got me thinking. I couldn't return to society life the same person I was. I was different now. I needed to fill my life with purpose. I needed to dedicate myself to the greater good of the community; to be less selfish and pay it forward.

Having ovarian cancer and chemotherapy gave me time, courage, and patience. It realigned my priorities and showed me what was actually important. It gave me strength and purpose. My higher power had saved me twice: once from addiction and now from cancer. Indeed, my prayers have been answered! It was clear to me that I indeed had purpose in this life. What exactly that purpose was, well, that's a work in progress.



I now work as a peer recovery coach, helping those who suffer with substance use disorder toward a pathway to sobriety. I am also the creator, writer and editor of a blog addressing the same. I'm an advocate. That's my purpose. I'm sickeningly optimistic.

I'm not finished. My story isn't done. I am still working on ways to support my brothers and sisters in cancer. But that's life, isn't it? Life is a journey. With every step, we can uncover new pathways to fulfillment. I'm not squandering whatever time I have left. Yes, I have been NED since May 2018. We all know that ovarian cancer

can be sneaky. It may come back; it may not. It is important to me to align myself spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

In light of being authentic, I do often get scared that my cancer will come back. I get the dreaded anxiety whenever I have to get another CT scan. However, all I can really do is use my time wisely and fill every moment with purpose. ❤️



# GOOSE SENSE



It is fall when we frequently see geese heading south for the winter. They always are in some type of a "V" formation, large or small, honking, as you watch them pass by, your head lifted up to the sky. You might be interested in knowing what science has discovered about why they fly that way:

***As each bird flaps its wings it creates uplift for the bird immediately following.***

*By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go through it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the power of the flock. When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wings and another goose takes over.*

*The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep their speed.*

*Finally, when a goose gets sick or is wounded and falls out, two geese fall out of the formation and follow the injured one down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly or until he is dead, then they launch out with another formation to catch up with their group.*

**The next time you see a formation of geese, remember their message to us.**

The *One to One Ovarian Cancer Support Group* is quite similar to the geese. We are part of a group who share a common direction and goal, and make our journey easier because we are traveling on the trust of one another and lift each other up along the way.

We have as much sense as a goose, staying with our group ("formation") and sharing with one another our experiences and wisdom of our journey. We take turns doing hard jobs and instinctively relieve another of holding a burden that is heavy. When one of us is down, others stand by us in our time of trouble.

And our words of support and inspiration help energize those on the front line, helping to keep pace in spite of the day-to-day pressures and fatigue. It is important that our "honking" be encouraging. Otherwise, it's just, well, . . . honking!



# HAPPY SURVIVORsary



Annie Kabisa	58 yrs !
Marcie Paul	11
Leana Lee	10
Lori Doggett	9
Stephanie Brown	3
Elise Kapelanski	3
Meghan White	1

*If your SURVIVORsary is missing, we did not receive an updated form from you. Please visit our One to One website for the form or contact Marilyn Brozovic via email: [brozovicm87@gmail.com](mailto:brozovicm87@gmail.com)*

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*Be like the bird who,  
pausing in her  
flight awhile  
on boughs too slight,  
feels them give way  
beneath her,  
and yet sings,  
knowing that she  
hath wings.*

~Victor Hugo



Newsletter information is presented in summary form, is general in nature and provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended in any way to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

## ***Objectives of support group:***

- ✦ *Provide a forum for ovarian cancer patients to address concerns;*
- ✦ *Support each other through initial treatment phase, during potential recurrence, and with issues related to long term survival;*
- ✦ *Establish core group of survivors willing to visit newly diagnosed patients;*
- ✦ *Increase awareness of ovarian cancer, including its symptoms and risk factors, in the hope of achieving earlier detection and treatment.*