



Ovarian Cancer
Support Group

Getting the WORD out



Even through the pandemic, we have been fortunate to be able to continue getting the word out about ovarian cancer through the **Survivors Teaching Students - Saving Women's Lives® (STS)** Program and the **Survivors Promoting Early Awareness and Knowledge (SPEAK)** Program. The **STS** Program, which is sponsored through **The Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance**, educates future healthcare providers about ovarian cancer by having survivors share their stories of diagnosis, treatment and beyond, along with facts about the disease. Additionally, the **Michigan Ovarian Cancer Alliance** works hand in hand with **STS** to educate the general public through the **SPEAK** Program.

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.

Marilyn Brozovic recently facilitated an online, Zoom format, **STS** presentation for the physical therapy students at Oakland University, along with presenters Michele Gatti, Kathy Mollo and Marcia Gurche. Marilyn received the following note from instructor Sara Arena, along with a picture of the virtual participants:

“On behalf of Oakland University Doctor of Physical Therapy Program, I want to extend our appreciation for you and the wonderful presentation you provided today. As always it was heartfelt, uplifting and extremely educational.”

Sara Arena PT, MS, DScPT
Associate Professor
Oakland University
School of Health Science
Physical Therapy Program



We ARE making a difference!

Every ovarian cancer survivor's voice has power. For more information or to **volunteer** for these programs, please contact **Marcia Gurche** (mgurche@gmail.com) or **Michelle Shepherd** (mshpherd61@att.net). We will help you write your story and get you started on a rewarding journey. Until there is a test, education and awareness are the key to helping with early diagnosis. You can help educate both the health care professionals and those in the public so that the disease is caught in the early stages.

"Who is the person (other than spouse or partner) that you can talk to about anything and who always helps everything seem better?"

This was the topic which was proposed at our last Zoom support group meeting. Bonita Gardner offered to share first, and the following beautiful story is the tribute she wrote to her dear friend, Kim.

My Friend Kim

By Bonita Gardner

My friend Kim kindles in me life and love. Sometimes we laugh together, sometimes we cry. The gift of her friendship is not just uplifting me, but honoring me wherever I happen to be. She doesn't define me by my illness. She doesn't shy away from being a constant presence in my life because she's afraid she won't know what to say. She doesn't grope for words because she doesn't bring pity to the table. She lets me be who I've always been – someone with opinions, someone who loves to laugh, someone who wants to face life head on. We don't just talk about me. She knows that friendship is about mutuality – a give and take between people who care about each other. She shares her struggles, cries on my shoulder too, recognizing that she doesn't need to protect me like I've suddenly become some fragile doll. And that's because she is fully aware and respects who I am as someone who needs to give to and love others as much as I need to breathe. She lets that part of me live fully.

She is the only person, other than my husband and sons, who isn't afraid to talk with me about death. She knows I don't talk about it because it means I've lost hope. But she respects that a beautiful grace in my life is my faith. She believes me when I tell her that I don't fear death, and she knows that that

is far different from me not wanting to live. Grace led me to be a volunteer in hospice for several years. And to see the difference with those whose denial cost them an opportunity to make choices about how they wanted to spend precious moments and to say important things to people they love while there was time to absorb it together.

So, Kim helps me think through how to make the best of life in light of my new reality. I said to her one day – "Darn, I sure want to dance." So she threw a "Mask" a "Rage" party in her backyard one August evening, with nine women donning masks and dancing more than six feet apart, under lights strung in the trees. And she helped me think through how to talk to my sons about the possibility of death because while my prognosis suggests nothing imminent, I might not have as much time as I always wanted. My oldest son came over a



(Cont. 'd on next page)

few days after an initial conversation with a list of questions. They ranged from the deep – was I afraid? to the mundane – what advice could I give him about law school and practicing law? Because I’d been a law professor, I told him I’m going to write him a booklet that outlines all the best advice I gave my students so he’ll have it in case I can’t tell him in real time. After we talked through his list, he trimmed my hair and we laughed all afternoon.

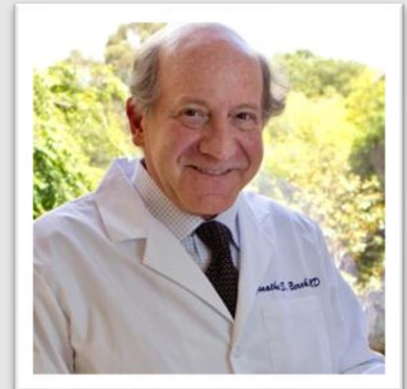
Kim helped me think of things I should prepare over the next months, years. For example, to enlist friends to provide different roles for my sons. My friend who is a federal judge will be my oldest son’s law mentor. I can write letters to be opened when a first child is born, on my guys’ 30th birthdays, etc. (Hopefully, I can tear them up as I’m granted another year to witness each event). I have the chance to teach my children how to live, and also how to die with peace and grace.

These aren’t morbid moments when Kim and I talk about death, although of course they can be very sad. We’ll move on to talk about different aspects of my life, we’ll talk about her life challenges, as well as her joys. We laugh out loud. Kim is a gift because she is brave, honest, loving, open, and always there. My dear, dear friend is a constant reminder that although life is joy and pain, it is oh so beautiful. 🌸



Communication IS the KEY

Article summary
by Marcia Gurche

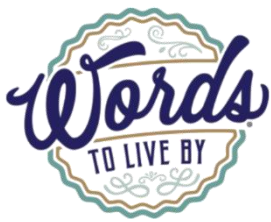


The **Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance** had an article on their website recently (*“Keeping Communication at the Heart of Gynecologic Oncology,”* 8/24/20) about Dr. Jonathan Berek, a gynecologic oncologist who has worked in ovarian cancer research and women’s healthcare for four decades. Dr. Berek was particularly interesting to read about because, while he has served in many prominent administrative positions in the field of women’s health, in medicine, and in education, he is still working as a practicing gynecologic oncologist. Throughout his career, “the conveying of information in empathetic, successful, understandable and compelling ways has been at the heart of everything that Jonathon has done.”

Dr. Berek said that he chose gynecologic oncology over other specialties because it combines all the aspects of what he thinks it takes to be a good doctor. According to Dr. Berek, “It’s one of the few subspecialties that starts with diagnosis and then you carry the patient all the way through.” It takes more than just being an excellent surgeon – it requires someone who can support a patient emotionally through the psychological, psychosocial and psychosexual issues that they deal with. To do that well, you have to be a good communicator and willing to be supportive of your patients.

Dr. Berek has shared his belief in the importance of good communication between physician and patient by helping to develop a program called **ACES: Advancing Communication Excellence at Stanford**. The program was designed to improve how doctors and other healthcare providers at Stanford relate to their patients and their patients’ families. So far, over one thousand professionals have completed this training. Doctor Berek called on his previous theater background to initiate another communication skills module called “medical improvisation,” which helps healthcare professionals to be more spontaneous in their interactions with patients. As if that isn’t enough, he has also developed a series for physicians and scientists that provides training in how to make scientific and medical presentations. Communication is not something that comes easily, and Dr. Berek realizes that these professionals need to know that it takes effort, practice and skills training.

Over the years, Dr. Berek has accomplished much in the field of medicine and has received several prestigious awards for the work he has done. But perhaps his most important contribution has been to draw attention to the doctor-patient bond, which can only be strengthened through healthy dialogue. As cancer patients, we look to our healthcare team for more than just medical advice; we also seek to be understood and supported. Dr. Berek appears to be a wonderful example of the type of healthcare professional we would all love to have on our team.



A man who had passed the age of 70 and was heading toward 80 was asked,

"What sort of changes are you feeling in yourself?"

Here was his response:

- After loving my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my children, my friends, now I have started loving myself.
- I just realized that I am not "Atlas." The world does not rest on my shoulders.
- I have stopped bargaining with vegetable & fruit vendors. A few pennies more is not going to burn a hole in my pocket, but it might help the poor fellow save for his daughter's school fees.
- I pay my waitress a big tip. The extra money might bring a smile to her face. She is toiling much harder for a living than me
- I stopped telling the elderly that they have already narrated that story many times. The story makes them walk down memory lane and relive the past.
- I have learned not to correct people even when I know they are wrong. The onus of making everyone perfect is not on me. Peace is more precious than perfection.
- I give compliments freely and generously. Compliments are a mood enhancer not only for the recipient, but also for me. And a small tip for the recipient of a compliment: never, NEVER turn it down. Just say "Thank You."
- I have learned not to bother about a crease or a spot on my shirt. Personality speaks louder than appearances.
- I walk away from people who don't value me. They might not know my worth, but I do.
- I remain cool when someone plays dirty to outrun me in the rat race. I am not a rat, and neither am I in any race.
- I am learning not to be embarrassed by my emotions. It's my emotions that make me human.
- I have learned that it's better to drop the ego than to break a relationship. My ego will keep me aloof, whereas with relationships I will never be alone.
- I have learned to live each day as if it's the last. After all, it might be the last.
- I am doing what makes me happy. I am responsible for my happiness, and I owe it to myself. Happiness is a choice. You can be happy at any time; just choose to be!

Author Unknown

Why wait til 60 or 70 or 80?

We can practice this at any stage and any age!



HAPPY SURVIVORSary!



Barbara Solms	29 years!
Georgia Roed	15
Anita Dukich	12
Janice Fero	7
Al Jean MacKenzie	6
Krystal Donovan	5
Jen Murakami	3
Janice Stanichuk	3
Jo Kwasny	2
Tina Roberts	2
Desiree Swiney	2
Mimi Gass	1



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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.*



Please join us for our ZOOM meetings at 4:30 pm on the second and fourth Thursdays each month.

(Except for holiday conflicts)

November 12

December 10

An email will be sent to everyone four days 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 one day prior to the meeting.

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

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