



PROFILE in *Courage*

This is the story of a lady named **Lisa**. She is a remarkably talented writer, a hardworking entrepreneur, a loving wife and mother, and an ovarian cancer survivor who has been courageously living with the side effects of her diagnosis for 11-1/2 years. This description doesn't really begin to describe her, but it is a short introduction to a woman who I greatly admire. Lisa has written a memoir which she is planning to self-publish on Amazon once she has finished editing it. Lisa's son, **Lucas**, who was a teenager when she was first diagnosed, is now a 27-year-old teacher, part-time farmer, and a musician.

Lucas wrote the prologue for Lisa's memoir and has graciously allowed us to print it here:



I had been teaching myself guitar for a few months, and I was just beginning to sound decent. I was 16 years old. I had my first job as a grocery store bagger, I had a driver's license, and my mom had ovarian cancer. Sitting in the living room, she suggested I learn to play "The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel. I was mildly annoyed by her suggestion. She'd already mentioned it a few times. I told her I would play it at her funeral. Dad shot me a look that turned my stomach. At that moment, I realized that my mom was dying. I was imagining playing the song at a funeral decades away. Mom's ovarian cancer wasn't something that would just disappear with an operation like a cyst or an oversized mole. It was deadly. Eventually, Dad explained just how sick Mom was.

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.

I've lost count of all the times I thought her luck had run out. During her first round of cancer, the thought of her death nagged at me. I still didn't believe she would die. By the time she was having her head cut open to have yet another tumor scraped out, I thought I was saying goodbye for good. I hugged her the morning Before she went into surgery. I felt like a child again. I wanted to hold onto to her just a little longer because, once I let go, she would be gone. This time, she wasn't dropping me off at school. I wasn't a child anymore. When I let her go, she would be gone forever. I thought I was saying "I love you" for the last time. Somehow, it wasn't. She has survived parts of her brain being cut out and irradiated, experimental drugs, and hopelessness.

My wife will sometimes ask, "Why don't you talk about your mom's cancer?" I do talk about her cancer, but in a way that's matter of fact and practical. How big is the tumor? What's the survival rate? When are we meeting at the hospital? Did she have a stroke? How are you feeling? My mind can be put at ease if I can rationalize what's going on and if there is a problem to solve. When it's out of my control, when I have to surrender to the unknown, I have nothing to say. I don't feel better for having verbalized what runs through my mind. I don't want to describe the funeral visitation I envision with my loss on display. I imagine the panic I'll feel when it isn't a nightmare to wake up from, when the house feels empty, when I'll never hear her voice again. It's better to focus on what I can control and to be accepting of what I cannot. I try to remember that my fears are not real. Why don't I talk about my mom's cancer? I don't want to.

(Cont. 'd on next page)

While the past ten years have been punctuated with months of fear and dread, my pain can only be a fraction of what my mom has undergone. I may not want to talk about it, but she needs to. She needs to share her story, so she can make meaning out of chaos. Like every parent, she'd tell me that life is unfair. It's hard to say how the scales balance out for mom. She has had a hard life. I don't think anyone would argue that, but she has survived. Against all odds, she has survived ovarian cancer, brain tumors and seizures. By some miracle, my mom didn't die.

Lisa's Story ~

Lisa was raised on a farm in southern Michigan, one of seven siblings who grew up knowing the meaning of hard work and hard play. As an adventurous and fearless youth, she survived a close call with fire and a near drowning. In her memoir, Lisa says that the farm taught her how to survive small wrecks and that "Life would teach her the rest."

Lisa met her husband, **Terry**, when they were both first year schoolteachers. She was teaching first grade and Terry had fifth grade when they met at an in-service session. Lisa and Terry married and expected to start a family soon after but, unfortunately, they suffered through ten long years of infertility and the pain and disappointment that went with it before they conceived triplets. Hospitalized at 24 weeks, Lisa gave birth to two tiny baby boys, **Andrew** and **Lucas**, and a little girl, **Kaitlin**, at 28 weeks gestation. Sadly, baby Andrew succumbed to necrotizing enterocolitis after living just 25 days. Terry and Lisa were understandably devastated to lose their precious baby, but they had to delay their grieving since they still had two children who needed their love and care. Finally, two and a half months after their birth, the new family was able to settle in with both children at home, where according to Lisa, "they learned that the journey didn't end at discharge" as the children were plagued with years of feeding struggles, stomach issues and breathing problems.

Twenty months after the birth of their first little ones, Terry and Lisa welcomed their daughter, **Elizabeth**. Lisa's dream to be a stay-at-home mom certainly came to her in aces and the next 18 years were filled with all the chaos, fun, and activity a family of five encounters. They enjoyed camping, and their travels over the years took them to places like Delaware, Washington DC, California, Virginia, New York City, and Disney World. They took family trips to Cancun and Maui and a few special trips to Germany to visit Terry's relatives. Terry eventually gave up teaching and over the years they became private business owners. He and Lisa were astute and used all their rewards from business expenses for travel mileage, allowing them the luxury of flying as a family. They approached each opportunity to vacation together as a chance to laugh and learn together. Lisa says that those moments were "the heart of our family story, and it was nothing short of miraculous."



(Cont. 'd on next page)

Being a business owner isn't easy, as they found out, but they seem to be a good team. Lisa worked with Terry whenever possible, doing whatever needed doing: washing dishes in the restaurant they owned, painting the outside of a building in scorching heat, helping to manage apartments, or refurbishing houses which they bought and resold. When the children were young, Terry often had to be out snowplowing for days at a time due to their landscaping business, leaving Lisa to manage the home front on her own.

It was during one of their treasured family vacations in New York City that Lisa experienced the beginnings of some painful ovarian cancer symptoms. She was subsequently diagnosed with Stage IC, High Grade Serous Ovarian Cancer. According to Lisa, as cancer stories go, it was quite uneventful. Three years later, however, she began to experience similar symptoms once again, as well as severe headaches. Eleven months later, she was diagnosed with a 4cc mass on her brain where the ovarian cancer had metastasized to. Surgery was performed to remove the mass, and she was restaged to Stage IV. Since the recurrence in 2019, in addition to living with debilitating headaches, Lisa has: endured two different bouts of stereotactic radiation; had two brain surgeries due to infection; had a titanium plate placed in her head; had Gamma Knife radiation; was hospitalized for grand mal seizures; tried Avastin and Zejula; endured years of horrific side effects from steroids; and has been on a continual unsuccessful quest to find medication for seizures which don't make her terribly sick.

Lisa is thrilled that she is now able to take care of her garden and walk a little in the nice weather. She has always enjoyed outdoor activities like snowmobiling and water skiing, and she was able to get back up on water skis after her first brain surgery, which was a huge goal for her. Her journey was not only her own, since her family also experienced every symptom, every MRI, every surgery, every treatment, and every terrible diagnosis with her. As high schoolers, her children faced the grim fear that she might not always be there for them. Lisa is very proud of her kids and since her diagnosis, she has seen all three of them graduate from college. She also has acquired two wonderful in-laws - **Hannah**, Lucas' wife, and **Alex**, Elizabeth's husband.

After Lisa's last brain surgery, she found out that the tumor was no longer there but that the pain she was still experiencing was caused by necrosis which was a result of the radiation. The necrosis caused her to have encephalomalacia – a condition she would have to live with. Lisa is no quitter and while life goes on for her and her family, and she no longer has the constant emergency scans and surgeries, she does live a life of pain and pain management with all its terrible side effects. Knowing Lisa, it won't surprise me at all if she finds herself "popping up on two skis and cutting across the wake" once again just like in summers past!

 ~ Marcia



MOSAIC EVENT

Mary Gilhuly, from the *Song and Spirit* organization, has kindly offered to put on another Mosaic Art Workshop for our *One to One* group. Mary has generously shared her time, materials, and talents with our group in the past: at our "Me, Myself and I" weekend, and at another event when we made lovely teal dahlia mosaic tiles. This time we will again be making lovely memorable **"quote mosaic tiles."** Each participant must send Mary a quote of her choosing, which has special meaning to her, and Mary will print it out and glue it on a tile. We will embellish it with lovely colored stones and glass. We will take this lovely keepsake home that night.

Space is limited, so if interested, please reply immediately for this fun event!

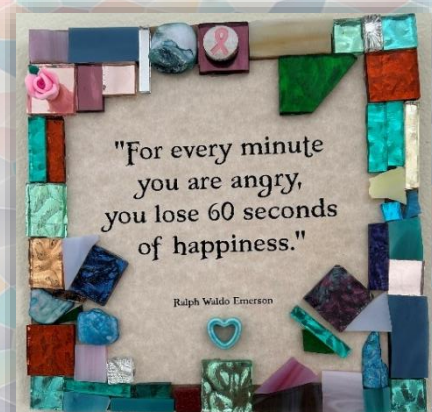
WHEN: June 4th

TIME: 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

WHERE: STARR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(SW corner 13 Mile & Crooks in Royal Oak)

COST: \$10 (We will donate this to Mary for her Song and Spirit Outreach Organization.)

Please RSVP no later than May 25th with your quote to mgurche@gmail.com



Girls' Getaway Weekend!

SAVE THE DATE

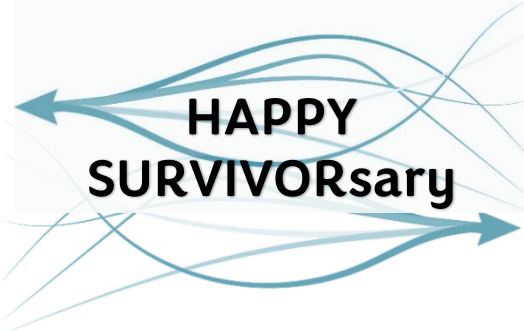
Plans are in the works for our annual **GIRLS' GETAWAY WEEKEND**. This year we will once again be holding our event at the beautiful **Capuchin Retreat Center** in Washington Twp. on the weekend of **Sept. 25 - Sept. 27**. You will not want to miss this opportunity to spend time with other women in a beautiful setting, laughing, learning, sharing, relaxing, crafting, and just having "ME" time. Everyone will have her own room with private bath, and the food is delicious and plentiful. The registration form with the weekend program will be coming out shortly.

JUNE

Peggy Moroney	23 yrs!
Marcie Paul	17
Lori Doggett	15
Elise Kapelanski	9
Nina Hamilton	4

MAY

Genny Beaudrie	31 yrs!
Letha Williams	26
Gail Bidinger	13
Barbara Blakemore	9
Paula Smith	6
Shani Lewins	4
Michelle LeeVan	3
Renee Gabriel	2
Karen Hopman	1



Group Meeting

Group meetings will be held at 4 pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month at

Gilda's Club

3517 Rochester Rd.
Royal Oak, MI 48073
(located north of 13 Mile Rd.)



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.

Group Leadership
Marilyn Brozovic
248-561-2027
brozovicm87@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor
Marcia Gurche
586-323-0838
mgurche@gmail.com

Chaplain
Rev. Renee Machiniak, M. Div

Patient Advocate
Patty Kurpinski
586-850-0152
pattykurpinski@gmail.com

Asst. Editor/Layout
Jeanine Dunaj

This educational newsletter is supported through philanthropic donations to the *One to One* ovarian cancer support group through Corewell Health Foundation Southeast Michigan (formerly the Beaumont Health Foundation).



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.