Cancer Survivors

Life is never the same after hearing the words, “You have cancer.” Today about 11 million Americans – or 1 in 30 people – have heard that diagnosis and are cancer survivors (persons with cancer of any type, current or past, who are still living). From the famous (Edie Falco, Ewan McGregor, Steven Spielberg, Rue McClanahan, Lance Armstrong) to neighbors and family members, cancer survivors are part of all our lives.

Going through the process of learning you have cancer, being treated, and completing your treatment is life-changing. Even after the physical treatment has ended, the emotional recovery from cancer may be just beginning. At this point, surprising emotions may surface:

✦ Fear that the cancer will return
✦ Anger that you can’t return to life as it used to be
✦ Irritation that friends and family don’t really understand
✦ Uncertainty about planning the future
✦ Overwhelming stress
✦ Blaming yourself or others for your situation
✦ Guilt at having survived cancer when others have not
✦ Strong feelings of sadness or even depression

But there is another story many cancer survivors tell. Some feel happier than they did before their illness. Cancer forced them to re-evaluate their lives. Now, rather than putting off things they always wanted to do, they do them immediately. Their relationships are closer. Their appreciation for every day is greater than before.

And some cancer survivors say they are able to freely express their real desires and needs and for the first time in their lives put their own wishes first. They are truly living.

June 6 Is National Cancer Survivors Day

Prayer: Thank you, God, for this day you have given me – its beauty, its people, its challenges. Keep me alert to the blessings you shower upon me. I am deeply grateful. Amen.

Your Advocate

Meet Chaplain Amy Snedeker

Rev. Amy Snedeker is chaplain educator at Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove and a colon cancer survivor.

“Some people have a panic attack at the word cancer,” says Rev. Amy Snedeker, colon cancer survivor, “but I don’t remember being super-overwhelmed. I had been an oncology chaplain and had thought about cancer over the years, so it didn’t undo me. Still, I was really surprised.”

Rev. Snedeker’s journey through cancer diagnosis, treatment, and recovery included much self-discovery. “I didn’t want statistics. No! That doesn’t motivate me. It makes me curl up in a fetal position and suck my thumb,” she admits. “I’m not a statistic. I’m a person. Statistics are for doctors.”

Cards from friends and family made an amazing difference. “The cards meant so much to me. Someone was thinking of me! Emails overwhelmed me, but, oh, I loved the cards.”

During treatment, Snedeker learned to allow others to help her. “The length of the treatment and its aftermath brought me to my knees. So I thought, ‘Okay, it’s my turn. Some day it will be your turn, and I’ll be there for you.’” Friends helped by transporting her to chemotherapy, providing a few meals each week, and helping with her beloved pup, Daisy.

“On the days I had chemo, a friend would take Daisy to doggie day care, so I didn’t have to worry about her one bit. We came to call that Driving Miss Daisy Duty,” Rev. Snedeker says with a smile.

June 6 Is National Cancer Survivors Day

Prayer: Thank you, God, for this day you have given me – its beauty, its people, its challenges. Keep me alert to the blessings you shower upon me. I am deeply grateful. Amen.

Advocate Health Care

Existing to serve our community

Related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Church of Christ

(www.advocatehealth.com)