

“You have to take control”

Geneva woman marks 24 years since cancer diagnosis

By Dan Chanzit
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When Lucy McCarthy learned that she had breast cancer, she refused chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

And she doesn't care if nobody believes her.

On April 23, McCarthy marked 24 years since she was diagnosed in 1980. “People should take control of their own bodies rather than take other people's advice,” said McCarthy, who lives in Geneva. “You have to take control. I'm a living example.”

McCarthy said she remembers the day she learned about her tumor. She went to her doctor for a regular checkup, and he found a lump in her right breast.

Her doctor wanted her to take a biopsy first, but McCarthy asked for a mastectomy instead. Later, a biopsy confirmed the cancer.

“I said you better take it while you've got me,” she said. “This business of having a biopsy, it's just another surgery. I said just take it.”

She said she refused chemotherapy and radiation because she did not think it would help.

“I didn't have faith in it, and I still don't” she said.

Since 1968, McCarthy has been on a regimen of vitamins and natural supplements. She grew up in North Carolina, where her family harvested herbs.

“I was always into the natural stuff,” she said.

When she was diagnosed with cancer, she went on a new vitamin and supplement regimen. A second tumor appeared in 1995, but she said she beat it with her supplements.

“You have to have faith in what you are doing,” she said.

“You have to believe in it.”

Now, it is her business.

McCarthy started a company called The Natural Woman after a bad customer service experience at a business that sold prosthetic breasts. The clerk was rude to McCarthy and did not offer the help she needed when she was vulnerable.

Women going through a difficult time after a mastectomy should not be treated so poorly, she said.

“You just can’t do that,” she said. “I said, ‘People shouldn’t be treated this way.’ I said ‘I should start my own business.’”

The Natural Woman offers prosthetic breasts, vitamins, herbal supplements and estrogen-free cosmetics. She runs the business from her home and has hundreds of clients all over the world.

“If someone needs to see me at 10:30 p.m., I’m here,” she said. “I’ve been called at 2:30 a.m. just to go site with someone. I’m just that type of person.”

She said she enjoys sharing her story with other women, especially if it helps them through their struggles.

“It hasn’t always been easy,” she said “Have a positive attitude. That is always important.”

McCarthy said she looks forward to attending this year’s Kane Country Rely For Life, the annual fund-raiser for the local chapter of the American Cancer Society. This year’s event is June 25.

The event is an all-night walk around the track at Elfstrom Stadium in Geneva. Teams of about 15 people raise money and pledge to keep at least one teammate on the track at all times.

The first lap is called the Survivor’s Lap. Cancer survivors are invited to take to the track celebrate defeating the disease. Observers circle the track and cheer on the survivors.

McCarthy’s brothers were not so lucky. One died of lung cancer, another of prostate cancer, another of a brain tumor and another of liver cancer.

“If they went on (the herbal supplement regimen) I did, I’m sure they’d still be here today.” She said.