



# Touch of Courage

. . . . . Connection

## Beyond Pink TEAM

**JULY 2009**

**Volume 13  
Number 3**

### Inside this Issue

- 1** Reclaiming Intimacy after Cancer
- 2** Capitol Steps
- 3** Cancer: Genes or Environment?
- 3** Hope Blooms for Breast Cancer Plant It Pink
- 4** Cancer: Genes or Environment?
- 5** A Survivor's Story
- 5** Save the Date!
- 6** Save the Date!
- 6** Resources

**Cedar Valley Cancer Committee**  
 1607 Heath Street  
 Waterloo, IA 50703  
 319-232-3219

Website:  
[www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org](http://www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org)

### Reclaiming Intimacy after Cancer

By **Connie Rasmussen, DGN ARNP**

Young women with cancer have special issues not often addressed with diagnosis, related to sexuality and relationships. Chemotherapy can affect ovarian function and cause premature menopause. Who wants to have a vagina of an 80 year old when you are not? Cancer treatments affect self-esteem, sexuality and relationships. Most side effects of treatment are temporary and life becomes more normal after the treatment period.

Sex and sexuality are important parts of everyday life. Sexuality affects our zest for living, our self image and relationships with other. Yet patients often do not talk about the effects of treatment or their sex lives due to embarrassment, feelings of being exposed, and it being an awkward topic.

When you first think of restarting sexual activity you may be afraid it will be painful. I would venture to guess that your first session of lovemaking was not what you expected. Have faith your vagina is a very forgiving organ. In other words, I would recommend you use it or lose it. You can bring your body back to a normal functional state and bring back pleasure as well, with a few simple choices.

Cancer treatments often reduce the amount of moisture your vagina produces. You may need to use extra lubricants to make intercourse more comfortable. Choose water base or natural oil based lubricants,

avoid gels with perfumes, coloring, spermicides or flavors as the chemical can irritate already sensitive skin. Common brands include K-Y Jelly, Astroglide or Lubrin. Be aware of herbal extracts such as aloe or lavender. These may cause irritation and in some cases, allergic reactions. Also, avoid any of the warming gels as these can cause burning.

Replens and K-Y Liquidbeads are moisturizers that can be used 2-3 times a week to help keep the vagina moist. Astroglide and Lubrin last longer than most lubricants. Olive oil and vegetable oil are natural oil based lubricants that are less expensive and are not irritating to you or your partner. Crisco shortening may be used as a moisture barrier. Vitamin E gel caps can also be used as a moisturizer but be aware they may stain.

Some women do well with vaginal hormones. They come in gel, cream, ring and tablet form. Talk to your physician regarding these options.

Vaseline, skin lotions and other oil based lubricants are not good choices as they may cause irritation and yeast infections. If latex condoms are used they can be damaged by petroleum products. Condoms or gels that contain nonoxynol-9 can be irritating to already dry fragile tissues. Even if you use a vaginal moisturizer you

may still need to use a lubricant before and during sex.

Make sure you feel aroused and use large amounts of lubricant prior to intercourse. If not well lubricated prior to intercourse you may experience dryness and pain. The risk of bladder infection is also increased if you have dryness or pain. Let your partner know if any type of touching causes pain. Try a position that lets you control the depth of penetration and movement.

Vaginal dilators are an option, especially after radiation of the pelvis, cervix or vagina. Using dilators keeps your vagina from getting tight with scar tissue after treatments. Dilators work best when used early after radiation or surgery to prevent shrinkage. If you go for many months without intercourse, it is important to use a dilator to keep your vagina in shape.

Premature menopause because of cancer treatment can cause hot flashes and night sweats making one sticky and sweaty. Most are not desperate for the same when having sex. Tell your partner what you want and need. Communication, communication, communication is the key to building a successful relationship and returning to normal after cancer treatment.

### Capitol Steps by Julie Fischer

Six Cedar Valley women joined 800 national and international advocates on May 2-5 in Washington, D.C. to beat breast cancer. As members of the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC), armed with the latest scientific

research and bolstered by their passion, these Iowans brought their health care priorities into the offices of their congressmen.

his website. He will post proposals as they evolve. If you have had any difficulties with access to healthcare and affordability, now is the time to



NBCC Delegation in Washington, D.C.

Their first priority is affordable, accessible health care coverage for all. "What good does it do to diagnose a woman's breast cancer," they ask, "if she cannot get the care she needs and cannot afford the chemotherapy medications prescribed after surgery?"

Their second priority is to require that a significant representation of patients and consumers, trained in scientific and health care issues, be included on all committees, boards, panels and other health care reform decision-making bodies. The NBCC holds "LEAD" - Leadership, Education, Advocacy, Development-training courses for this purpose every year.

Both Senator Harkin's and Senator Grassley's offices emphasized they expect to have a draft of health care reform legislation by the end of the summer. Congressman Braley urged all constituents to keep informed of progress by checking

bring these problems to your congressional representatives' attention.

The National Breast Cancer Coalition hosts this annual conference in D.C. to educate its members about achieving quality health care, based on evidence, and established best practices. Members learn how to translate this information into effective lobbying efforts.

This year's delegation, led by cancer survivor and Iowa Breast Cancer Education chair Christine Carpenter, included three other breast cancer survivors: Cindy Harris, Ellen Duffy, RN, and Jane Clark. Julie Fischer, RN, and Nicole Desousa, UNI student majoring in Health Promotions and Women's Health, were first time participants.

*Printing donated  
by  
Beyond Pink TEAM*

# Hope Blooms for Breast Cancer

## Plant it **Pink**



**Plant it Pink** is a project sponsored by the Beyond **Pink** TEAM to honor people living with breast cancer. Our goal is to have pink tulips blooming throughout the Cedar Valley to show our support.

*Order your premium Pink Impression (dark pink) or Ollioules (rose with white edge) by August 14, 2009. Bulbs can be picked up on Saturday, October 17, at the Covenant Cancer Treatment Center, 200 E. Ridgeway Avenue, for fall planting.*

**Save this Portion!**

**Pick up bulbs on Saturday, October 17, 2009 from 9:00–11:00 a.m. at the parking lot of Covenant Cancer Treatment Center 200 E. Ridgeway Ave. Waterloo, IA**



[www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org](http://www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org)



**Pink Impression**



**Ollioules**

Name		_____	
Address		_____	
City/Zip/State		_____	
Home Phone	_____	Work	_____
Number of bags	_____ Bag(s) of 12 tulip bulbs at \$10 per bag	Cost	_____
	_____ Bag(s) of 50 tulip bulbs at \$40 per bag	Color	_____
	_____ Bag(s) of 100 tulip bulbs at \$75 per bag	P or O	_____
Total No of Bags		Total Cost	_____

**Mail this portion and check made out to Beyond Pink TEAM to:  
Dee Hughes, 203 Bourland Avenue, Waterloo, IA 50702**

## Cancer: Genes or Environment? by Christine Carpenter

When Sandra Steingraber looks at a farm field, the plant biologist in her sees modern agricultural crops growing in the rich soil left by long-gone prairie grasses; the cancer survivor sees the pesticides and industrial wastes leaching into the groundwater; the activist sees the telltale "cancer clusters" that mark elevated levels of environmental carcinogens. And the poet weaves together: "Ten thousand years of tallgrass prairie have left a fainter trace on the place I call home than twenty-seven years of DDT spraying."



Sandra Steingraber

It was these multiple perspectives that made Steingraber's talk to our community on April 6, so powerful. Cancer, it told us, is not so much in our genes as in our environment. As Steingraber spoke of the ravages of pollutants and their links to rising cancer rates (as much as 80% of all cancers have environmental causes, according to the World Health Organization), she also told her own story, hopscotching between the repercussions of her own diagnosis with bladder cancer at age 20, and an investigation of the pollution, by both pesticides and chemical wastes, of her Illinois hometown of Pekin -- a circumstance that's far more routine than one would like. The wide expanses of the Illinois farmland where Steingraber grew up combined with the microscopic landscape where carcinogens wreak havoc on body chemistry to paint a devastating picture of the harm modern farming methods and manufacturing are doing to our environment, and ourselves.

Following the birth of her first child, Faith, Steingraber published *Having Faith*, subtitled "An Ecologist's journey to Motherhood." She added "parent" to her portfolio and to the lenses through which she sees her (and our) environment. It is about the discovery of her own body as an ecosystem to itself: "an inland sea with a population of one," as she calls it. "When I look at amniotic fluid," she writes in *Having Faith*, "I am looking at rain falling on orange groves. I am looking

at melon fields, potatoes in wet earth, frost on pasture grasses. The blood of cows and chickens is in this tube. The nectar gathered by bees and hummingbirds is in this tube. Whatever is inside hummingbird eggs is also inside my womb. Whatever is in the world's water is here in my hands."

Steingraber is optimistic when she takes the long view. It seems more and more people are aware of environmental issues and more and more people are trying to do something about it. The science is on our side – the more data come in, the clearer it is that we are taking needless risks, especially to the health of our kids.

Consider joining Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-action's Environmental Health Working Group and help make the Cedar Valley a healthier place for all to live and grow. We meet at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month, except November when we meet the third Thursday, and December when there is no meeting, at UNI's Center for Energy and Environmental Education. Questions? Contact Christine Carpenter 319-266-0194.

## Tea for your Garden by Cindy Harris

One of the best things to do for your garden, flower beds and yard is to give them compost TEA. This will replace chemical-based fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides so you can garden safer. Compost tea increases plant growth, provides nutrients to plants and soil, provides beneficial organisms, helps to suppress diseases and replaces toxic garden chemicals. For use in a normal yard or garden you can use your own compost made from yard clippings,(no chemicals on the yard) leaves, vegetables ,and not have to go buy manure. These sites are good for more information: [www.watchitrot.com](http://www.watchitrot.com), [www.beginner-gardening.com/compost-tea.html](http://www.beginner-gardening.com/compost-tea.html) [www.compostguide.com](http://www.compostguide.com) [www.wormman.com](http://www.wormman.com).

You can see many more sites by just typing "compost tea" in the browser. Look around until you find a recipe you want to try. It is easy - and fun, too. So while you are enjoying your tea this summer, let your yard and gardens enjoy theirs.

Have a great summer and grow something healthy!

## A Survivor's Story by ShanQuiesha Robinson

Having seen my granny and younger sister battle breast cancer, I knew the importance of performing monthly self breast exams. In October of 2007, at the age of 25, I found a lump in my left breast. After discovering the lump, I was in a state of denial that the lump even existed. At the time, I was a college student and had started to bury myself in my studies. I ignored the lump until it began to hurt. Finally, after about a month, I was convinced that I should see a physician.

Because of the strong family history of breast cancer I was referred to the breast care center. I went in to what I thought was a scheduled appointment only to find out I had missed my originally scheduled appointment. At that time, I was asked to reschedule. This is when I realized behind all of the denial there was some anxiety of knowing the truth. The good thing is that I was eventually seen that same day. Two days later on November 28, 2007 I was told that I had grade 3 invasive ductal carcinoma of the breast. And this began my journey.

Upon receiving the diagnosis, a low white blood count was detected and I was hospitalized immediately. That was the worst experience ever. There were so many thoughts and emotions going on in my head. I was thinking that I just received this devastating news and I am isolated in this hospital room. I cried with my nurses, I cried to my sister. I was overwhelmed! Even though I had seen the

affects of cancer, nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to go through. I chose not to have surgery right away because when I was diagnosed I was just weeks away from graduation. I wanted to enjoy that moment in my life and spend time with family and friends.

Contrary to what my oncologist suggested, I decided to follow my little sister's footsteps and request a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction. My goal at the time was to be proactive and beat breast cancer. Although there was still a chance that the cancer could reoccur I wanted to decrease those chances.

Shortly after surgery I began chemotherapy treatments. Little did I know this would be the most trying experience ever! I also knew this journey would be a test of patience and perseverance. I remember my first treatment; I thought I was superwoman or something and thinking this is it, I can do this! By the end of the day, I was hugging the toilet and becoming totally unaware of all my surroundings. Each treatment got harder and harder to endure. I wanted to give up so many times. Constant encouragement from my mother and thoughts of my daughter living without me kept me going. I spent a lot of time journaling, reading the bible and developing my relationship with the Lord. There were times when I was frustrated because I wanted to be at a different place in my life but that wasn't the plan God had for me. I had to accept what was happening to me, endure this particular experience in order to grow as a person, and share my story with others who have been impacted by breast cancer.

My name is ShanQuiesha Robinson and I am a Survivor!

### Save the Date!

**July 6 1:30 p.m.**  
***Touch of Courage***  
Breast cancer support group  
2101 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo  
Dawn Colbert 415-6430

---

**July 7 1:30 p.m.**  
***Care and Share Support Group***  
Covenant Cancer Treatment Ctr.

---

**July 23 6:30 p.m.**  
***Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-Action***  
UNI Center for Energy and  
Environmental Education  
Corner of Campus Street and  
Jennings Drive  
Christine Carpenter 266-0194

---

**July 23 7:00-8:00 p.m.**  
***Environmental Health Working Group***  
UNI Center for Energy and  
Environmental Education  
Christine Carpenter 266-0194

---

**Aug. 3 1:30 p.m.**  
***Touch of Courage***  
Breast Cancer Support Group

---

**Aug. 4 1:30 p.m.**  
***Care and Share Support Group***  
Covenant Cancer Treatment Ctr.

---

**Aug. 14** Deadline for tulip  
bulb orders

---

**Aug. 27 6:30 pm.**  
***Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-Action***

---

**Aug. 27 7:00 p.m.**  
***Environmental Health Working Group***

---

*continued on page 6*

**Sept. 1 1:30 p.m.**  
*Care and Share Support Group*  
Covenant Cancer Treatment Ctr.

---

**Sept. 14 1:30 p.m.**  
*Touch of Courage*  
Breast Cancer Support Group

---

**Sept. 15 4:30 – 7:00 p.m.**  
*Young Cancer Survivors Event*  
3712 Cedar Heights Dr., Cedar Falls

---

**Sept. 24 6:30 p.m.**  
*Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-Action*

---

**Sept. 24 7:00 pm.**  
*Environmental Health Working Group*

---

**Oct. 3 8:00 a.m.**  
*Pink Ribbon Run*  
Starts at 6<sup>th</sup> and Main  
Downtown Cedar Falls

---

**Oct. 5 1:30 p.m.**  
*Touch of Courage*  
Breast Cancer Support Group

---

**Oct. 6 1:30 p.m.**  
*Care and Share Support Group*  
Covenant Cancer Treatment Ctr.

---

**Oct. 17 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.**  
**Tulip bulb pick up**  
Covenant Cancer Treatment Center  
200 E. Ridgeway Avenue

---

**Oct. 22 6:30 p.m.**  
*Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-Action*

---

**Oct. 22 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.**  
*Environmental Health Working Group*

---

**Nov. 3 1:30 p.m.**  
*Care and Share Support Group*

---

**Dec. 1 1:30 p.m.**  
*Care and Share Support Group*

---

**Resources**

Information, support, counseling, and educational materials are available from the following:

**Beyond Pink TEAM** is a local breast cancer organization providing a variety of services . [www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org](http://www.cedarvalleybreastcancer.org)

**Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-Action** is a local advocacy group taking action against breast cancer. [www.iowabreastcancer.org](http://www.iowabreastcancer.org)

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer** includes a helpline, newsletter and information.  
[www.LBBC.org](http://www.LBBC.org)

**Young Survival Coalition** connects with other young women diagnosed with breast cancer. [www.youngsurvival.org](http://www.youngsurvival.org)

**Cancer Care** is a national nonprofit organization offering counseling, support, financial assistance and education to individuals with cancer and there families.  
[www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Iowa Consortium for Comprehensive Cancer Control** offers cancer information and links to resources in Iowa. [www.canceriowa.org](http://www.canceriowa.org)

**American Cancer Society** offers cancer information and services.  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

**National Breast Cancer Coalition** The NBCC’s mission is to eradicate breast cancer by focusing the government, research institutions and consumer advocates on breast cancer. It encourages advocacy for action and change.

Connect with us...

A donation for Touch of Courage is both needed and appreciated. All donations go to support the services of the Cedar Valley Cancer Committee and are tax deductible.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

\$\_\_\_\_\_ amount of donation

General Donation  Newsletter Donation  NBCC Scholarship Fund

Make checks payable to the Cedar Valley Cancer Committee and send to  
1607 Heath Street, Waterloo, IA 50703