

Hope Ministry for Women Dealing with Cancer

Dr. Deb Douglas/www.lifeway.com

When God began leading me to start a cancer ministry to be honest, I ran from it. Cancer is just too hard. My personal hurt from losing my parents, 2 grandparents, and others was fresh and raw. I entered a time of prayer, seeking help and a way out of this call I felt God had given me.

Waiting for the daughter of our pastor to have surgery for breast cancer, one of our members, Christy Gipson, told me she'd just resigned her job as an ontological pharmacy sales consultant and wanted to help me start a cancer ministry. I cried. Both of us knew it was one of those God moments when your life changes forever.

I had already been researching what other churches and organizations were doing but nothing seemed quite right for us. As Christy and I talked with cancer survivors, their families, and medical personnel to see what this ministry needed to be and how we could facilitate the birthing of the ministry.

We developed a design and a plan. Since then, we have tweaked that design to best meet the needs of the people we serve. It's been a difficult journey. Since July of this year, we have lost 5 of our Hope members.

Here's what works for us:

Hope Support Groups: meets twice a month for fellowship, prayer time, share time, and a story (an invited guest to share their cancer journey).

HopePINK: one of the things we quickly learned was that women who have breast cancer have unique needs. From HopePink came a website with practical insights in surviving breast cancer: www.rockmycure.com

Hope Prayer Warriors: a team of prayer warriors who are committed to praying for the weekly needs of our Hope members. The Hope members love this! They tell me how they see God working through the prayers and how special it makes them to feel to know Hope cares. Always seek permission before adding someone to a prayer list.

Hope Mentors: Partnering someone who has survived a type of cancer to someone newly diagnosed with that type of cancer to share information, encourage, and pray together.

Hope Banquet: a once a year celebration of how God has worked throughout the last year.

Hope Stories: we record each person's story. We use these to encourage newly diagnosed patients. See our website http://www.firstbossier.com/hurts_cancer.asp

Hope Network: This is the practical part of Hope Ministry. We have teams of volunteers led by volunteers who meet the practical needs of cancer patients and their family members. Services include food/meals, shopping, transportation, encouragement (happy's!), lawn care, car care, and hospital visits.

Hope Professional Network: These are the oncologists, ontological pharmacists, PAs, RNs, and Hospice specialists we turn to when we don't have answers. We do not give medical advice, but we do help patients find answers.

Going beyond our church: We minister to anyone we hear about with a cancer diagnosis. We also encourage our volunteers to volunteer with the American Cancer Society in order to share Christ's HOPE with a wider audience.

Hope Ministry can be full time. Christy and I have had to work on our personal boundaries in order to keep from being overwhelmed. We are never "done" with the ministry. As hard as it is, I have been blessed beyond measure. Hope has changed my life and the lives of all the volunteers.

Resources:

Women Reaching Women in Crisis

Transformed Lives

A Trusted Friend

Women Reaching Women

Shepherding Women in Pain, Bev Hislop

I Will Carry You, Angie Smith

American Association of Christian Counselors