

New Connections

HELPING YOU FIND YOUR WAY THROUGH TREATMENT



Issue 22



Breast cancer survivor has a slightly different message about the disease; but then, *he's a man*

Thurston Murray has always been an avid jogger and exercise enthusiast, running regularly in his town of Orangeburg, South Carolina. Twenty-five years ago, after a particularly long run, Murray noticed a clear discharge coming from his left nipple. Six weeks later, he found a lump on his left breast. He promptly went to see his family physician. It was 1983 and the doctor told him not to worry – that men couldn't get breast cancer.

Murray did worry, however, and chose to get a second opinion from a doctor in Columbia, South Carolina. Today, he credits that doctor with saving his life.

The Columbia doctor diagnosed Murray with early stage II breast cancer. Three days after his initial consultation, he underwent a modified radical mastectomy followed by 23 radiation treatments.

Unusual but invasive nevertheless

Although breast cancer is 100 times more common in women than in men, it's possible for men to develop the disease. The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2008 nearly 2,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in men in the United States.

Knowledge is power

Today, it's easy to search for and find information about breast cancer in males. However, in 1983, when Murray was diagnosed, there was a general ignorance of the topic, even among those in the medical profession. "These days, you can go on the Internet...but back then you were mostly on your own," says Murray.

The lack of information about the disease frustrated Murray. An outspoken man by nature, Murray has spent the last two decades speaking out about men and breast cancer, giving other men the knowledge he wishes he had. Some men might be embarrassed about discussing their health, let alone their breasts, but Murray has been anything but shy. "If I can help one man by telling my story, I'm willing to do that," says Murray. "Men need to know they can get breast cancer."

Spreading the word

To get the word out, Murray uses every medium he can. He has written letters to local papers and major publications, posted on message boards online, and spoken at his church and at community events.

As physically active as ever, Murray has also been a longtime participant in Relay for Life®. "I'm out there just about every year," he says of Orangeburg's event.

Murray has been cancer free for years now, but he is still committed to his cause. If you see blue ribbons as well as pink this October (Breast Cancer Awareness Month), then it may well be the initiative of Thurston Murray.

**For more cancer information, call 1-800-ACS-2345
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