

Donna Lawrence: A Life-Changing Example

By Tracy Alford, Quail Creek News, October 2005

It was April 1, 2004. Donna Lawrence was the Executive Director of Calm Waters, a non-profit organization for families, and she was eight weeks away from getting married. She was also in the midst of raising \$90,000 for the organization to close out the fiscal year. To say the least, her life was stressful, and then came news that would be life-altering and life changing.

“I went in for what I thought would be a routine mammogram,” Lawrence recalls. “The radiologist called and said they found something abnormal. A biopsy was performed and the results were inconclusive, so they sent them to specialist at Vanderbilt. I received the call from my radiologist on April Fools Day as I was rushing into a stressful meeting about fundraising. He said, “Donna, the results are in. You have breast cancer.”

Lawrence had two lumpectomies within 10 days – and received permission from her doctor to delay radiation until after the wedding and when she had fulfilled her fundraising commitment to Calm Waters.

“I started radiation in July, and it was emotionally draining – I received a new type of radiation therapy and had intensive treatments over a 10-day period. When that was over, I realized that my life was out of balance and that I needed to take a break.

“Before getting married, I had been a single mom for 11 years – trying to balance work and take care of my family. Getting diagnosed with cancer was a huge wake-up call that I had not been doing a good job of taking care of myself,” Lawrence added.

She resigned her position and spent the first couple of months after completing radiation at home – relaxing and trying to do absolutely nothing – which is easier said than done for a woman used to being “on the go.”

“I really needed time for personal ‘stress detox’ and to evaluate my priorities. I spent years taking care of everyone else. I hadn’t exercised regularly and my diet was unhealthy, both which impact our body’s fight against disease. While my stress level may not have caused my cancer, it certainly didn’t help. In fact, studies have shown that stress can cause cancer cells to multiply – so I spent a lot of time early in my recovery evaluating ways to lessen any undue stress to ensure I remained cancer-free.”

When Lawrence decided to go back to work, she wanted to do something to help women. Specifically, she wanted to share her life experience as a working mom whose life had gotten out of balance – and how cancer changed her priorities.

“I had the idea of being a personal coach, and I discovered it was an untapped market in Oklahoma . In November of last year, I attended the International Coaching Federation conference in Quebec City, which has a membership of 20,000 worldwide. I realized my Masters degree in Counseling, in addition to my professional and life experiences were a perfect match for coaching. I work with both men and women, but I have a special interest in helping women. I’m convinced that if we can live our lives in balance – emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually – we will live longer, happier lives. I learned this lesson the hard way – I want to help other women learn to put themselves first and achieve that healthy balance.”

As a personal coach, Lawrence offers support and guidance for clients in meeting their personal and professional goals. This coaching partnership provides clients with the motivation to overcome roadblocks through powerful dialogue and accountability.

“Coaching is different from counseling,” Lawrence said. “As a personal coach, I don’t delve into past emotional concerns – coaching is about the present and the future and moving forward. For example, if you’re having work or life challenges, how do you move forward from the present to achieve more fulfillment? A personal coach can really be invaluable in setting and maintaining a course of action in a person’s life that will lead them to a better place. It’s all about improving a person’s quality of life.”

To say that being diagnosed with breast cancer was a life-changing event for Donna Lawrence is an understatement. Today, she is a survivor and a personal testament to others about the importance of taking care of themselves.

“When a woman and a mother is diagnosed with breast cancer, the whole family suffers,” Lawrence said. “This experience has made me realize on a personal and professional level how important it is for women to take care of themselves.”

As a result, Lawrence is also a staunch supporter of the Central Oklahoma chapter of the Susan G. Komen Foundation, and its upcoming “Race for the Cure” on October 15.

“Every single day, money raised by the local chapter here helps fund research to eradicate breast cancer. In addition, educating other women about the importance of early detection is so important. Participating in the race is one of the ways that people can support the chapter’s mission in fighting breast cancer.”

To learn more about the Central Oklahoma chapter of the Komen Foundation and to participate in this year’s “Race for the Cure” on October 15, call 405.526.7223, or visit their website at www.okckomen.com.

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