

NORTH VALLEY

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MICHELLE ROBSON: *Speaking Out Nationwide for Women's Health*

Someone had to speak up. Michelle Robson said to herself, "Why not me?"

By Leona Christensen



Robson has become the voice of women too beleaguered by the fog of illness and confusion to speak for themselves. Robson, a Phoenix philanthropist and women's health-care advocate, has been leading the nationwide charge against a citizen's petition filed with the Food and Drug Administration to ban and regulate certain compounded hormone therapies—custom medications that millions of women take to ease the effects of menopause.

In countless media interviews, the outspoken advocate shares her personal story of how compounded hormones restored her health following a complete hysterectomy two years ago that transformed the active, vivacious woman into someone who struggled just to get out of bed in the morning. Thanks to advocates like Robson and others, the FDA has been bombarded with more than 50,000 letters from women protesting the petition.

"Women are suffering, and find solace in knowing that I have been there," said Robson, who personally answers each e-mail and correspondence. "After my hysterectomy, I was never told what to expect or how the procedure would impact other aspects of my physical and emotional well-being. I receive e-mails from women who say they feel like they are going crazy and their husbands and families don't understand what they are going through. I share my story with them, and they know they are not alone and help is there."

Robson, whose husband, Ed, is chairman of Robson Communities, one of the nation's adult retirement developers, recently formed a foundation called Healthy Women, Healthy Choices. The foundation is a grassroots group committed to educating women about key health care issues.

Robson envisions Healthy Women, Healthy Choices as the beginning of what will become a leading popular effort fighting for women's health-care rights. The organization provides objective information and shares facts that women can share with their physicians.

"We are taking a 'girlfriend-to-girlfriend' approach to getting the facts to those who have no place else to turn," Robson said. "Think of it as 'Women's Health Care 101.'"

Robson said that women need to take responsibility for their health.

"For too long, we have been passive and have allowed others to make our most important health decisions," said Robson, whose passion and conviction fill her voice as she speaks. "It is okay to fire your doctor if you feel he or she does not have your best interest at heart. It's not unusual to see many doctors before finding the physician who will listen to you and provide you with options."

Robson says she often reflects on the days following her hysterectomy when her deteriorated health led to nine hospitalizations in one year. It was from those troubling experiences that the idea for Healthy Women, Healthy Choices emerged. Robson believes she was meant to go through those experiences so that other women will not have to suffer.

"The future of Healthy Women, Healthy Choices lies in the hands of every woman," Robson said. "I am starting this foundation, but we share the responsibility to execute this work. We need the support of our husbands, brothers, and sons to help us achieve our victory." ■

For more information, contact Robson via e-mail at hwbc@robson.com or on her Web site www.healthywomenhealthychoices.com.