

I just returned from the PAMF-sponsored Saturday exercise class for ladies who have cancer. (I'm still out of breath!!) Wanted to take a few lines and tell you what a lifeline that class has been and to THANK YOU for providing that class! My cancer was diagnosed in June 2014. Then after surgery, when my chemo treatments began, I was invited to this class by Joanna L, my nurse practitioner. It addresses our needs well—not just for the physical, but also for the emotional, mental, and even spiritual.

I have, in my past, attended scores of exercise groups, classes, the Y, gyms, home groups, etc., so I was thinking it would be “just another class and good for me” so I'd give it a try. WELL, it was not only welcoming and good for me, but it really was the icing on the cake of my cancer treatment! The women (and Peter!) were so understanding, so encouraging and it is so customized for the specific needs of each of us in all the different stages of treatment and healthy maintenance. It has become my beloved COMMUNITY.

Joanna is eternally energetic, but also loving, encouraging, and able to give solid advice when issues arise. We need LOTS of attention as we go through this journey and she provides it. She is the glue...everyone is introduced and—well—you leave feeling SO much better about yourself! Today we had a small class of about 25-30, but last week, we were stuffed into our room—maybe 40 or more! If all of us attended every class, we'd take up the whole 3rd floor!

Diana and Peter add a great dimension as well. Diana offers moves designed to help us overcome new constraints due to surgeries, chemo, radiation, etc. Oh, yeah, and “chemo brain”!! While she encourages us to excel, she also will work with a person who has either temporary or permanent issues, helping them to adapt, yet still move forward physically. If a move is too difficult, she will show alternative options that still help. No one feels bad about their limitations—just encouraged!

Peter is SO good at keeping the pace for us with his music, changing at a moment's notice to respond to our group needs and motivate us all. A boom-box experience it is NOT! He can vary tempo, volume, and “flavor” to help us keep up and keep growing. Live music adds an amazing, engaging dimension. With these 3, the variations of exercise are amazing, warm-ups, stretches, yoga, dance, weight training, aerobics, even, relaxation. I think I have been in better shape during cancer than before—and it all certainly helped me stay motivated even through the toughest parts of treatment! I looked forward to class SO much, that no matter how awful I feel, I go to class, which was important during the chemo!

Oh, can't leave out the other attendees...we not only get to know each other, we encourage each other and—unlike “any ole exercise group” we have walked the same journey! There is such an identification with each other that goes above and beyond other groups. We care for each other—it helps!

Most of my career was spent at Cityteam Ministries—and one of the key principles in helping the homeless, the addicted, the poor, is that change and recovery best occur in a caring, safe community, where no matter what you bring, you are accepted. It very much reminds me of how we each walk into exercise class—some come out of isolation or desperation, some out of pain or fear, but all quite vulnerable and needy—the class gives us camaraderie and courage to persevere. Change DOES come and we leave as “warriors”—more than ever ready to face the battle ahead! Thanks again, PAMF!!!

Sincerely,
Kathy Woodward