



Press Release
16 December 2009

Complete Strangers Can Make the Difference When Cancer Strikes

For most people, this time of year is full of happiness and good cheer as we prepare for the Christmas celebrations. For those who have cancer hovering over their lives, however, this is a difficult time as they struggle to put on a brave face for their friends and relatives. Often it is a complete stranger whose words can make all the difference to your day to day life when cancer strikes, as those who have found a buddy through Cancer Buddies Network (CBN), www.cancerbuddiesnetwork.org know only too well.

The website allows sufferers – and that includes relatives & friends of those affected – to find someone else who is going through exactly the same experience so they can support and encourage each other through the ups and downs of their cancer journeys.

Denise Bartup, 48, is one of many women suffering from breast cancer who have found solace in a buddy from the website. She was first diagnosed with cancer when she was just 37 and then told she had secondaries two years later which was said to be inoperable and incurable and that her prognosis was poor. “I really didn’t know where to turn for help. The medical profession, rightly or wrongly, puts all the emphasis on the treatment of a patients cancer, and doesn't offer much if any, support for a patients emotional or psychological well being.”

Denise says that at the time of her secondary diagnosis she became suicidal and struggled to cope. While there was no CBN back then, Denise found a Canadian website which she says probably saved her life. “It was only the fact that I was able to talk to other women who were going through and had been through similar nightmares that I was able to think, 'well if she can do it, so can I'. However, since I found CBN I have met a number of lovely ladies and one in particular, Suzie, who is now one of my closest friend as a result. Despite not having met her physically yet, I feel that I know her well and we have become very close as a result of our introduction on the site.”

Suzie France, 49, was diagnosed with primary breast cancer in 2005 and went through surgery, chemo and radiotherapy. She was then diagnosed with bone secondaries two years later and having four young children, the youngest of which was just six, Suzie felt real sorrow at the idea of leaving them. "I went to CBN specifically looking for someone else with a similar diagnosis and found Denise. Finding someone else with secondaries, a similar age, especially who had been diagnosed back in 2001, and was still going, was a huge comfort to me. It meant it was possible to live with this," says Suzie. "Just knowing Denise is an email away is always a comforting thought and she has helped me no end. Her emails were warm, empathetic and encouraging right from the start. Your family and friends are huge sources of support and comfort but they don't truly know how it feels." Denise and Suzie are really looking forward to their first meeting in 2010.

www.cancerbuddiesnetwork.org is a resource where anyone who has been affected by cancer can go and find some respite and friendly cheer from people who understand what they are going through, because they've been there too.

"Christmas can be a very difficult time for people suffering with cancer," says Jan Rutter, the founder of the charitable website. "People who have been hit by cancer in some way, often go out of their way to cover up their suffering so it is these people who really need understanding and support. Frequently it is the spouse or close friends of the cancer sufferer who get overlooked, but they are the ones who often need the most support because of the emotional and physical strain of caring for someone who has the disease and the accompanying feeling of helplessness, can be so hard on them."

The website is free to join and open for anyone and everyone regardless of how they are being affected by cancer. "Christmas can seem overwhelming to people who are suffering, so the website is like a sanctuary where they can go and talk 24/7 about anything that is on their minds, things that their friends and families might not understand, and they know that at CBN they will find folk who know exactly how they're feeling. The wonderful thing is that there will be lots of buddies who will come back to them with heartening messages of real concern, support and cheer' says Jan.

The message to anyone who has ever been affected by cancer, is to go online and talk to someone. It may just make your Christmas or perhaps you could make the difference to someone else's.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Cancer Buddies Network (CBN) is a registered charity no 1120207.
- Jan Rutter and the two women featured in this release are available for interviews
- CBN has the support of Macmillan Cancer Support, Millennium Grants UnLtd, Google, and has links with other major cancer charities and hospitals up and down the country.
- The patron of the charity is the eminent cancer specialist Professor Ian Smith MD, FRCP, FRCPE, Professor of Cancer Medicine at The Royal Marsden Hospitals, Sutton and London.

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