

Carolyn Hiser

Breast cancer has been a part of Carolyn Hiser's life since she was a teen and her mother was diagnosed with the disease. It has followed her and her sisters since then. With intimate knowledge of the disease, Hiser devotes herself wholeheartedly to supporting those afflicted and to finding a cure through the Central Indiana Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Here we learn a little bit about the woman so dedicated to life before, during and after the disease.

What do you consider your greatest virtue? I think the trait that has gotten me the furthest in life is my ability to keep the goal in sight no matter what the roadblocks are. Persistence might be another way to describe that.

What do you most deplore in others? I have very little patience for those who say "we have always done it that way" without considering new or alternative ways to approach things.

What do you like most about living in Hendricks County? I grew up in a small Putnam County town but have spent a lot of time in large metropolitan areas during my life. Hendricks County gives me easy access to both worlds.

If you had to live elsewhere in Metro Indianapolis, where would it be? I have a lot of friends and a lot of involvement on the northwest side of Indianapolis and would probably choose to live there – however, I think downtown Indy is a very exciting place, as well.

If you could begin life over, what would you change? If I could do my life over I wouldn't be as afraid to break out of my world and try new experiences. I think we all miss a lot in life by staying where it is comfortable.

If money were no issue, how would you spend it? With unlimited funds I would retire and make spending time with our children and grandchildren (and great grandchildren) a much more common occurrence. In addition, there are so many great "causes" in our world that need our support that I would have to spend time (and money) giving back.

What makes you happiest? I love spending time with friends and family and volunteering at my synagogue.



What is your favorite vacation spot? A few years ago we traveled to Hawaii and it was absolutely beautiful. However, I have to say that I am also very content to sit on the deck of our friends' home on Lake Michigan and just watch the water.

What do you do with idle time? I am not sure what idle time is. I have two part-time jobs that are almost equal to a fulltime one and most of the rest of my waking hours are spent volunteering. I do enjoy reading when I get a chance.

What is it that makes you angry? I am angry that we haven't been able to cure breast cancer yet and that every day we still lose women (and men) to this horrible disease.

What do you do to escape from reality? I really have no desire to escape from reality.

What or who is the greatest love of your life? I have to say that the greatest love of my life is family – all inclusive.

Which living person in Hendricks County do you most admire? I admire all of the women in Hendricks County who are fighting

life battles in addition to trying to maintain a normal life for themselves and their families. Women have a tendency to take care of everyone else first and then – if there is time, money or energy left, they take time for themselves. While this is admirable it usually means that they don't care for themselves. Women suffering from cancer, domestic violence and heart disease are all out there taking care of their children, their homes and their jobs without asking for help and giving little or no thought to their own health.

What is the quality you most like in a man? Gentleness.

What is the quality you most like in a woman? Strength.

What is your greatest extravagance? My husband says my greatest extravagance is "blingy stuff."

What are your fears, phobias? I have two fears – not living to old age and living to old age without the means to support myself.

What has been the happiest time of your life? I have to say that while the last 16+ years have not always qualified as happiest, they have been the time when I most appreciated life. I became a breast cancer survivor on January 4, 1995 and every day since has been a blessing that I am truly grateful for – no matter what the day held for me.

Which talent would you most like to possess? I would love to be able to sing – I can't carry a tune in a bucket.

What do you most value in your friends? I think there are two traits that friendship requires

by definition – honesty and loyalty.

Which historical figure do you most identify with? I don't know that I can say I identify with her, but I certainly admire the strength and courage and fortitude of Golda Meir.

What is your greatest regret? I regret that I was never fortunate enough to work at a job with a pension plan.

What tenet do you live by? Never give up.

Compiled by Cathy Myers

Breast Cancer is not your grandmother's disease

By Carolyn Hiser

Although my involvement with the Central Indiana Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure came much later, my life has been linked with breast cancer for many, many years. I was still in high school when my mother was diagnosed with late stage breast cancer at the age of 40. She endured disfiguring surgery, cobalt treatments and chemotherapy and no one spoke of it. She had never had a mammogram – or probably even a clinical breast exam. Amazingly enough she survived another nine years before dying of ovarian cancer.

One year later my first sister was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 25, and 10 years later my youngest sister was diagnosed at the age of 30. The Komen Foundation did not exist in those days – no one talked about cancer in general, much less breast cancer. For me, breast cancer was scary but not paralyzing. My mother was a victim of the horrible disease but my sisters were survivors. They were proof of the value of early detection.

I thought I had escaped – I wasn't diagnosed until I was 46 years old – but I took nothing for granted. I badgered my doctor for a referral to a breast cancer specialist who examined me every year and I also had a mammogram every year. Call it stubborn, call it tenacious, call it just plain bullheaded, I would not give up until I was comfortable that I was doing everything I could to make sure that even if I was destined to have breast cancer, I would be informed, involved and in charge. I was lucky – I had my family as my support system, my sisters were my role models and my resource for information. Women like my mother and Suzy Komen did not have that advantage and many women even today don't have it either.

My first experience with Komen was long before there was a Central Indiana Affiliate. I raised funds for, and participated in, the Race for the Cure right after I was diagnosed – still going through chemo. I have told countless newly diagnosed women that they should do the same. For me, the visual of all those women in pink shirts and hats – all those women who have survived breast cancer – some for more than 40

years – is the most uplifting, tangible reassurance that there is life after breast cancer. I became a team captain and a volunteer.

When the opportunity to become a part of the Komen organization presented itself it was a dream come true. I am a part-time employee – the Finance Manager and Public Policy/Advocacy Representative. I have served as a peer reviewer for several national Komen grant awards and have been a member of the Pink Honor Roll (Affiliate's top 100 fundraisers) for the past several years; but I think my most important role at Komen is the same as everyone who is a part of our team – to talk about breast cancer whenever we have a chance.

Knowledge is power and only with knowledge can we overpower breast cancer. We need to remind everyone that breast cancer is not your grandmother's disease. Women in their teens can get breast cancer, men can get breast cancer, breast cancer can look very different from one survivor to the next and most importantly – early detection is your best defense.

Twenty-five percent of the money we raise goes around the world to fund research to end breast cancer forever but 75 percent stays right here in Central Indiana to fund education and screening for uninsured and underserved women.

I appreciate this opportunity to tell my story and to remind every woman reading this to be vigilant and everyone who has a woman in their life to make sure that woman is vigilant. I also wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't urge everyone to either participate in and raise funds for the Race for the Cure or to support someone who is and if you don't know anyone else who is participating I would be delighted for you to support my fundraising efforts. Registration will be open in October at komenindy.org and the Central Indiana Race for the Cure will be held on April 21, 2012.

