

## *All Cancers are Not the Same*

Before my husband and I went through it, I just thought cancer was cancer, I didn't see all the individual types, even though my own Mom had had breast cancer. But having experienced it myself, I now know that that isn't the case at all. As cancer survivors, we all have a bond, sure, but the people who are closest to us, are the people who have the SAME type of cancer.

I have lots of friends with cancer. They are some of the greatest friends I have, since I know a lot about how they feel. But its not until you meet someone who has the same type, that you instantly realize all cancers are different. There is an innate bond between you. You can see it in each other's eyes. You don't have to say anything, but hug and its like electricity. This person knows what I know, feels what I feel, and has the same scars! It's a relationship like no other.

In Los Alamos, there are currently 5, sadly, previously 6, women with ovarian cancer, who have been diagnosed in the last 5 years. I'm one of them.

As an aside, this, as any gynecological oncologist will tell you, is extremely unusual for a town of our size. In medical speak, its statistically significant and should be investigated.....but that's a whole different story.

What I'm trying to say here is, that they are my "ovarian cancer buddies." As a chronic disease, ovarian cancer is not a one-shot-chemotherapy-you're-cured cancer. It's with you for life. As such, we go through a different experience. That's not to diminish, in any way, the fear and terrible experience other cancer survivors go through. But I'm sure they would agree that they feel a much deeper bond with people of like cancer, than they do with others.

So how do you go about finding other cancers survivors of your own kind? Well even in a small town like this, it can be difficult. I had to set up, and publicize a website to do it. But that's incredibly hard work!

So here are some suggestions. Without wanting to blatantly sing the praises of the Los Alamos Council on Cancer, we are working hard to help this happen. I recently created a feature on their website called "Find A Buddy" for exactly this reason (I know, what can't this women do you're thinking.

And if you're an employer keep thinking! – sorry another blatant advertisement.)

But back to finding a Buddy. If you go to the LACC website, and click on "Find a Buddy", you can simply leave a message saying what kind of cancer you have and that you'd like to find a Buddy. Easy huh?

Going to the Relay for Life? Well again, as a survivor, you can get a pin from the LACC, which tells others what cancer you've had, avoiding that awkward "So what type of cancer do you have?" Oh really, um, I really don't know anything about that, I'll go ask someone else."

Believe me, finding a Buddy is worth it. In my own quest, I found one of the most compassionate, giving, and inspirational women I have ever met. And I can categorically say that she's the superwomen, not me! She's my soul mate, my shoulder to cry on, my rock.

So go find yours. They're probably just sat there, waiting to be found. And boy, when you find one, it will change your life!

*Kay Kerbyson is Secretary of the Los Alamos Council on Cancer. Help and support for local cancer patients and survivors can be found at [www.losalamoscounciloncancer.org](http://www.losalamoscounciloncancer.org) or you can email Kay at [kay@losalamoscounciloncancer.org](mailto:kay@losalamoscounciloncancer.org)*