

Breast Cancer [LAURA FIAL] Uses Her Voice to Thrive, Not Just Survive

SCOTTSDALE Resident Published in New Anthology "Voices Of Breast Cancer" Being Released in Honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month--

NEW YORK, NY, SEPT 2007 – More than 200,000 women and men will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone, and 49,000 individuals will die from this dreaded disease. The emotions that arise from a diagnosis of breast cancer, or any life-threatening illness, can run the gamut from fear and despair to a new-found sense of determination. In the case of Laura,, being a breast cancer patient inspired her to write and author her own story, which is being released in *Voices of Breast Cancer: The Healing Companion: Stories for Courage, Comfort and Strength* in October 2007.

Debra LaChance, a diagnosis of Stage I breast cancer inspired in her an entrepreneurial spirit to found LaChance Publishing which is releasing

Voices of Breast Cancer was created by Debra LaChance whose own diagnosis pushed her entrepreneurial spirit to found LaChance Publishing and develop the *Voices Of* book series. *Voices of Breast Cancer* shares over 50 intimate, real-life stories by people from all walks of life who write with candor and courage about their experiences with breast cancer, from the shock of diagnosis to navigating through different treatment options to the ultimate triumph over the disease. These riveting stories, including a contribution from Olympic gold medalist Peggy Fleming, are accompanied by essays from experts in breast cancer research and treatment, including Dr. Michael Shepard, discoverer of the breakthrough drug Herceptin[®], offering clear explanations of the science of the disease and the ongoing movement towards finding a cure.

"Hearing that you have breast cancer can be terribly isolating," Laura says: "The first thing I sought was a connection with others who had worn the same shoes. I knew there were countless others out there, just like me, who needed to hear the stories of other women, and who needed to share their own stories as well."

LaChance Publishing is donating 100% of profits to LaChance's other entrepreneurial venture *The Healing Project* (www.thehealingproject.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and support of those living with life-threatening and chronic illnesses. The first two books in the book series, *Voices of Lung Cancer* and *Voices of Alzheimer's* were published earlier this year.

Among its many initiatives, The Healing Project's online Resource Center provides a personalized patient guide and a professionally screened and tailored database of national, state and local medical and support services such as low-cost or free health care services, medical equipment, health insurance options and social support services. This Fall, The Healing Project will launch Voices Who Care, an online social network designed to bring together individuals with similar medical issues. The network will allow users to create their own personal pages and offers person-to-person search, email, bulletin boards and photo/video upload and download capability. The Healing Project is also raising awareness through after-school programs such as Fruity Tales, an adventure in nutrition for underprivileged elementary school students in New York City.

"We are launching Voices Who Care to give people another opportunity to make a personal connection," says Laura Fial. "When you are dealing with an illness on a daily basis, connecting with others going through a similar experience is essential to your state of mind and recovery."

Visit www.thehealingproject.org to find out more about the organization, purchase a book, submit a story for future publications or to learn more about upcoming programs.

laurafial@cox.net www.laurafial.com read below my
personal story/ sent to this FABULOUS book.....

Soul Survivors
Laura Fial

"Happy birthday, Laura. You have breast cancer."

Not the exact words from my doctor, but the timing of the diagnosis couldn't have been worse. And what a birthday it was: I was also dealing with my husband leaving me, being kicked out of my 10-piece music band and my young daughter's diagnosis of severe panic and anxiety disorder.

The oncologist, Dr. Quiet, gave me the news: "You have the good kind of cancer," she said. *Good kind?* Quite honestly, I didn't know there was a good or a bad kind. I thought cancer was cancer: horrible. How could losing a breast be good? I was crushed.

Dr. Quiet knew I was a professional jazz singer, always in the public eye and that I ran a group that put together musical fundraisers for charities. Dedicated to helping the victims of this disease, Dr. Quiet was starting a non-profit to benefit the cancer cause. She asked me to go home before starting my treatments and think of something I could do that gave me pleasure, passion, courage. I tried to calm down and listen as she told me to think outside myself, maybe think about something that would do some good for others who were going through this.

But, I reminded her, the fundraisers I helped with were for causes that were not about me personally. Everyone else had cancer, not me! Then she gave me the best advice anyone could get: "Please go home and come back with a positive attitude," she said, "I have sixty or so patients right now worse off than you but who are off the charts with positive energy." Wow.

I was ashamed. So I thought, okay, I am going to lose a breast. But I need to get through this. I *want* to get through this. I've been in music for over twenty years. Why not surround myself with positive women, women who are going through this same crisis? And sing about it! I would call my group the Soul Survivors, women who sing from their souls; women who sing about surviving. So that was it. I had a mission that would become my focus as I went through the frightening process of dealing with breast cancer. And the proceeds from the Soul Survivors work would be donated to Dr. Quiet's foundation.

I decided to run a contest to find a song that would represent the concept of the Soul Survivors. I called a Phoenix newspaper, the *Arizona Republic*, to tell them about it. After my first week of treatments, exhausted, yawning, but crying tears of happiness I was interviewed by a reporter. The story ran on the *Republic's* front page; by noon that day I had 70 calls from women all over the valley and a song for the group.

With the perfect song in hand and a roomful of musicians and singers, I held the first practice in my home with a person from the local NBC affiliate present and a Phoenix choir director to manage this massive group. To save money, we recorded our first CD in a friend's garage. We were thrilled to have a CD release party with an audience of 1,200 complete with food vendors, wine distributors and a silent auction. It was a magical night. I was exhausted but had met lots of new friends and the Soul Survivors were on their way to touching many people. Since then we've recorded more CD's, gotten lots of attention for the cause and yes, we've had a great deal of fun on our mission to heal through music. And focusing on

the music and the mission of the Soul Survivors helped me through my journey as it has others in the group and as we hope it will help many others whose lives are touched by this disease.

I am now in the company of some tremendous soul survivors. I am getting married again, to a wonderful man, my singing career is very busy, my daughter is going off to college in the fall and doing very well, and I am cancer free. I may have lost a breast but I consider it a small price to pay for all I have gained.

Laura is a professional jazz singer who lives in Arizona. She is the creator of the *Sing For Life Foundation*, the mission of which is to heal through music.