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JEWISH NEWS

of Greater Phoenix



November 9, 2001/Cheshvan 23, 5762, Vol. 54, No. 9

Breast cancer CD provides inspiration

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It started as a song she wrote for her daughters after she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

It became "From Day One," a song on "Move Forward with Peace in Your Heart," a compact disc designed as a source of inspiration to women who face a life-threatening illness.

In July 2000, Marilyn Nierenberg-Shaoul found out she had breast cancer. She had felt a lump the year before but a negative mammogram result gave her false comfort. Her doctor never mentioned the option of an ultrasound and it wasn't until her annual exam the following year that the lump was detected. "I want women to know that just because you get a normal mammogram, it does not mean you do not have breast cancer," Nierenberg-Shaoul warns. "If you feel a lump or anything abnormal, you should go for an ultrasound."

After finishing radiation therapy, Nierenberg-Shaoul started writing songs. "The writing started as sort of a musical therapy for myself," she explains.

In May 2001, she met Laura Fial, founder of Breast Cancer CD 2000 Foundation. Fial, a professional singer, was diagnosed with breast cancer in February 2000. As part of her recovery, she recorded "Breast Cancer CD 2000: Soothing the Soul and Encouraging the Spirit," a fund-raising project which raised about \$15,000 to benefit the Arizona Institute of Breast Health and Y-Me Breast Cancer Network of Arizona.

She organized a chorus of breast cancer survivors - called "The Soul Survivors" - to sing on "Soothing the Soul." Since its inception, the group has performed at bookstores and recently sang the national anthem at Coyotes and Phoenix Mercury games.

It was at one of these events that Nierenberg-Shaoul met Fial. After learning about the group from a newspaper article and attending a Barnes and Noble Booksellers appearance, she joined The Soul Survivors and shared with Fial the songs she had written about her experience with the disease.

The compact disc "Move Forward with Peace in Your Heart" was born, recording Nierenberg-Shaoul's songs, Fial and The Soul Survivors' voices and the talent of local professional musicians at Living Head Audio Recording in Phoenix.

"I view it as a musical greeting card," Nierenberg-Shaoul says. She says she hopes it provides inspiration to women going through life-threatening issues and help them gain strength from knowing that other women have gone through similar experiences and survived.

One of the two songs, "From Day One," is a message to her daughters, ages 8 and 3.

"I wrote that song because if I didn't make it, it would be advice I would give to my children," Nierenberg-Shaoul says.

"When you listen to those lyrics as a breast cancer survivor, they really hit you," Fial notes. "It was so incredible when we sang the song and the energy that came out of all of us."

The second song, "Will He Walk Away?" is a story about a woman whose husband leaves her because she has breast cancer, inspired by a breast cancer survivor who confronts her fears and triumphs over them.



Marilyn Nierenberg-Shaoul, top, and Laura Fial are the forces behind "Move Forward with Peace in Your Heart," a compact disc designed to provide inspiration to women with breast cancer.

Photo by Leisah Namm

The compact disc also includes an interview by Lin Sue Cooney, from KPNX-TV, Channel 12, with both Nierenberg-Shaoul and Fial sharing their experiences.

Although Nierenberg-Shaoul has written poetry since she was a child, as well as art and crafts books for Time Life Books, she says she thinks of herself more of an artist. She says the songs were part of a creative process, something in her that had to come out. "I normally thought it may have taken the form of painting or something like that," she says. "In this particular case, it took the form of song."

The cover artwork on "Move Forward" is a painting by Nierenberg-Shaoul from nearly 30 years ago. "It was just very prophetic that I did a nude woman on the landscape of a piece of sheet music," she says.

The pair are using this compact disc as a stepping stone to their next compact disc. Proceeds from "Move Forward" cover current production costs and will be used to fund future recordings and music from The Soul Survivors.

For the next compact disc, which they hope to release in February 2002, they plan to ask local musicians to submit songs for a contest, using The Soul Survivors as judges.

Their goal is to use proceeds from the 2002 compact disc to fund breast cancer education and awareness organizations and a scholarship for nursing students.

Nierenberg-Shaoul hopes her work is an inspiration to other women.

"The most meaningful part to me was that I was driven creatively and I think that any time you have an inner feeling and you express it and you can share it with other people, it's very gratifying," she says.

"If I could just save one person from developing breast cancer or someone who's been diagnosed with breast cancer ... then that would have made everything worthwhile."

Fial is a member of Temple Kol Ami in Scottsdale and Nierenberg-Shaoul is affiliated with Temple Chai in Phoenix.

Fial will perform "God Bless America" and both women will sell copies of "Move Forward" at a holiday luncheon and boutique for the Shalom Chapter of Hadassah, 1:30-4 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 13, at the Oakwood Country Club in Sun Lakes. The noon luncheon is \$16. Call Roxanne, 480-899-5696.

"Move Forward" is available at Borders at Biltmore Fashion Park, Fiesta Mall and Paradise Valley Mall, as well as other locations. Call 602-885-2700 or visit www.breastcancercd.com.

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