

How to honor a breast cancer survivor

Meaningful and inexpensive gifts from the heart

By Jen Sachs

Leanne and her friend Joan walked down the quiet hallway of the medical building. Leanne had just heard the news that her test results, to check to see if the cancer had spread, had come back clean after receiving a double mastectomy the week before.

Minutes earlier the surgeon scanned the report after it came through on the fax machine behind the counter of the reception desk in the waiting room. She casually told Leanne that everything looked fine and she probably wouldn't need radiation.

As they left the room Joan made her best attempt to support Leanne by enthusiastically saying, "Wow!", "That's great news!", and "Thank you God!".

Leanne was very quiet but responded, "What the surgeon said is just not sinking in. I don't feel like I can really believe her."

14 The drive home was very quiet. Joan tried to show her support with occasional words but mostly she listened to the few comments Leanne offered as she continued to express that she was having trouble knowing how to process her thoughts and how to think of life now that she had finished chemotherapy treatments and surgery.

A few weeks earlier another woman had shared with Leanne and Joan that she had experienced depression following her treatments and that this was common among breast cancer survivors as they transitioned to a new phase of their life.

Reflecting on her experience with Leanne, Joan couldn't help but think that there must be a more effective way to support her.

There are several ways, Leanne realized, that could do just that. You don't have to be an artist, just ingenious in finding simple ways to say we love you and we are so happy that you and we are so happy that you are okay." Try honoring your friend with these meaningful and inexpensive gift ideas that don't require artistic talent.

Tree planting ceremony

Plant a seedling or tree to symbolize the beginning of a new chapter of life and hold a life ceremony in honor of your friend. Involve her in deciding what type of tree she would like to plant and where it will be planted. She might like to have it planted in her own yard or a local park. Make sure

to get permission from the local park association to plant the tree and then invite her closest circle of support. Allow each person to share how much the woman being honored means to them and offer words of encouragement.

Make your friend the guest of honor

Host a lingerie party for a friend who completed reconstruction surgery. Give gift certificates or choose an elegant new bra or night gown to help your friend feel beautiful. Don't forget to include a gift receipt if you give a gift. Depending on your friend's personality, make it fun and humorous with breast-themed shower games and decorations or for the more reserved person have a quiet tea party with fancy finger foods and pretty flowers.

Compile a recipe binder

Gather together favorite healthy recipes and make a cookbook to promote health for the future. Help support your friend by equipping her with a binder or recipe box full of cancer-fighting yummy recipes. Choose recipes that include ingredients that are high in antioxidants such as berries and colorful vegetables and are also low in sugar. Have each person who contributes display the recipe on a nice piece of paper provided or a recipe card in their own creative way. Have the group meet together for a potluck dinner with the prepared recipe they contributed and present the recipe book or box to the guest of honor.



Plant a memory garden

Plant pink tulip bulbs in a garden, window box or flower pot. They will bloom each year and represent another year of survival. Share a special time with your friend by driving together to the local garden supply store and let her pick out the shade of bulbs she would love most. Choose from delicate pink to fuchsia. Return to her home and help her plant the bulbs.

After scrubbing the dirt out from under your finger nails enjoy a cool glass of pink lemonade together and some yummy treats.

Schedule a girl's day out

Remember the anniversary date of the day your friend was diagnosed and celebrate survival with a special lunch or outing. Once a year plan an event with your friend to celebrate another year of life and cancer survival. For the adventurous type, go for a hike and enjoy the outdoors or pack a picnic and sit by a lake or among the trees and flowers of a local park. For the artsy type, go to a local art gallery, exhibit or play. Celebrate life through the beauty of visual art, the relaxing sound of coffee shop pianist or by laughing until you have tears running down your cheeks at a comedy play at your local theater.

Seize the moment. Remember all those women on the 'Titanic' who waved off the dessert cart.

Erma Bombeck

Artists come Together TO MAKE difference

This night will include:

- art exhibit
- silent auction
- hors d'oeuvres
- no host bar
Ages 21 & up only
- live salsa, latin music
by Gene Perry & DJ

March 1st
6:30pm - 10:00pm
ONYX ROOM
852 FIFTH AVE.
SAN DIEGO, CA

ISABELLAGIFT.ORG

Honorary MC:
Perett Godwin
Take Five, Channel 5

Art Coordinator:
Matthew Frye