

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness month

By JESSICA RONGITSCH, M.D.

Last week I picked up a book of photography from a friend's bookshelf. Distracted, I flipped through the pages thinking it was just another glossy coffee table book, but I stopped at a photo of a beautiful woman in her fifties with a half-shaven head and a large stapled wound on her scalp.



She looked otherwise strong and athletic. She

was smiling boldly for the camera, a kayak paddle in her hand. It was the story of a retired fashion model a wife and a mother – who survived advanced breast cancer, only to be diagnosed with an unrelated glioblastoma, a deadly form of brain cancer. She was given only a few months to live.

Instead she fought. She underwent surgery, aggressive chemotherapy, and radiation; while her husband photographed her in

different stages of her illness. Then she took up kayaking, gardening, yoga, and photography. She made a book out of her photos and the photos taken of her; and she has outlived her doctors' predictions by years. She said that living with cancer has changed her life. It has given her an appreciation for each and every day, and has transformed her into a modern day warrior.

I was inspired. I was reminded of my own patients who have lived with, or are living with, cancer; each of them brave in his/her own way. It also reminded me that in today's age of modern medicine, advanced technology and rising health care costs now, more than ever, we patients must be our own advocates. We must fight to maintain our health. This fight starts with simply taking care of ourselves; eating healthful foods, exercising, caring for our bodies and our minds. It also includes making sure we undergo the screening tests necessary to stay well.

For women, this includes monthly self-breast-exams, annual women's exams/clinical breast exams, and, if you're over forty, an annual mammogram. Screening mammography is a woman's best chance to find cancer early. Mammograms can detect subtle cancerous changes in the breast, long before a lump is ever palpable.

Almost every week, I see patients who refuse

or postpone their mammograms. While they usually cite a variety of reasons, very often, I believe, the unspoken true reason is fear; fear of the possible results. After all, breast cancer is unfortunately very common. One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in a 90-year life span.

Most of us know and love someone who has had to face it, but the good news is that there are more than two million breast cancer survivors alive in America today. Breast cancer is treatable if found relatively early. If found in early stages, the five-year survival rate is 96 percent.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) and what you need to do is very simple. If you are a woman, and you haven't had an annual exam in the past year, call your doctor and schedule an

appointment. If you are over 40 and you haven't had a mammogram in the past year, call your doctor, and set one up. If you are under 40, but have a family history of breast cancer, talk to your doctor about your individual screening needs. There is a new digital mammogram that may be more effective in screening for younger women with denser breasts.

If you are without medical insurance, don't let that stop you. Call, or stop in, the Pike Market Clinic on Post Alley. We are celebrating Breast Cancer Awareness Month with two days of mammography screening and women's health education. We have a sliding payment scale for individuals without insurance, and we participate in King County's Breast and Cervical Health Program (BCHP) that provides free breast and cervical cancer screening for low-income women.

Local Color
Art, Coffee, & More...

TWO-FOR-ONE
buy one get one free
ALL BEVERAGE BAR DRINKS

working studio
gallery
meeting place
coffee shop

ART OPENINGS
First Saturdays 6-9pm

1606 Pike Place • 206.728.1717
LocalColorSeattle.com • Pike Place Market

SOUND VIEW CAFE

Best View Great Food

UNDER THE MARKET'S CLOCK
& DOWN THE RAMP
OPEN DAILY AT 7AM
206-623-5700

Grab a quick meal
at the soup & salad bar
-or-
Relax & order from
the menu
Breakfast, Lunch
& Dinner

PIKE PLACE MARKET

First Avenue businesses

Dragon's Toy Box

Educational & Heirloom Toys, Games & Fun!

Unique educational toys and games for all ages.
Puzzles, activity books, art supplies, science kits, children's musical instruments, construction kits, wooden trains, infant & toddler toys, arts & crafts kits, dress-up, learning aids, play and collectible dolls, New and vintage Breyer Horses, puppets & marionettes.

1525 1st Ave, Ste 2A
Seattle, WA 98101
dragonstoybox@earthlink.net
206-652-2333

1

Cafe Mimosa

at Pike Place Market

Simply the best!

COUNTRY STYLE
HEARTY BREAKFAST
(try our famous housemade granola...)

LUNCH - CAJUN, FRENCH AND MORE!!!
Fabulous Seafood Jambalaya,
...our delicious warm baguette sandwiches, pastas, gumbo...

1523 First Avenue (206) 624-2598

2

PIKE PLACE BAR & GRILL

For fine dining...
It's your
Pike Place Market

Open 7 Days A Week
Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

PIKE PLACE BAR & GRILL

90 Pike Street Corner Market Bldg
ATM Available 624-1365

3

At First & Pike for 30 years

Dinner daily
Bar open until 2am
206 682-3049

pike place market

www.ilBistro.net

4

Virginia

1

Stewart

2

Pine

3

Pike

4

Pike Place Market

FIRST AVENUE