

Flash Mob Dance: Empowering Survivors

Julia Sinden Whiteker, RN, MSN, AOCNS®

Four years after its inception, the multidisciplinary breast cancer program at Clarian North Medical Center in Carmel, IN, has treated more than 650 survivors and has been expanded to include lymphedema care; bras, prosthesis and wigs; social work; family and individual counseling; complementary medicine; and survivorship.

The staff travels with the patients on their cancer journey, understanding that we are not just here for them, but extraordinarily committed. They put their lives in our hands. Although that may sound dramatic, it is true and explains the deep bond we have with each other. We stand in awe of them while reaching out to provide support. They have faced cancer and their own mortality and many are left with the lingering aftereffects of the strong treatments they were given. Some are young with hovering families that make them seem to almost glow with youth and hope for the future. Others are on their own in the world, creating their own support systems, standing tall even when they feel like curling up in a ball on the floor.

I felt it was time to hold an event to celebrate our survivors. I wanted all the usual things, a party and community partnerships, but something special too—something amazing and something that made a statement. I wanted to create a moment of unity for all of the survivors, not entertainment, but empowerment.

A month before the mid-December event, I was listening to an interview with Bill Wasik, a performance artist who is credited with inventing the flash mob. In a flash mob, a group of people have a secret plan and they execute it in public together in a way that seems spontaneous to the unsuspecting bystanders. Different types of flash mobs exist, such as freeze



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Christy Dunn and her daughter Karli, at left, share memories with Angela Dearman and her daughter Jayla during the survivor celebration at Clarian North Medical Center in Carmel, IN. Christy and Angela were both pregnant when they were diagnosed with breast cancer and treated at Clarian's multidisciplinary breast cancer program.

(all the people suddenly freeze in position and stay there), dance (people start dancing in a choreographed way as if in a musical), and pillow fight (well, pillow fighting).

I talked with our oncology social worker, Jill Dodson, LSW, LMHC, LMFT, about

flash mobs. She had seen one where more than 20,000 people danced to music by the Black Eyed Peas. We shared a sense of awe at what it might have been like to be one of the dancers, planning and practicing for those few moments of moving in unison, creating a great dawning

Julia Sinden Whiteker, RN, MSN, AOCNS®, is the manager of the Breast Care Center at Clarian North Medical Center in Carmel, IN. The author takes full responsibility for the content of the article. The author did not receive honoraria for this work. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the author or editorial staff.

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