



Building Strength With A Hashtag: Breast Cancer Community Unites To Raise Awareness

(NAPSA)—Jewel Crawford Ajibade, Linda Carey and Priscilla Dzurich Ribera are just three of the estimated 173,000 women in the United States who are living with metastatic breast cancer. Managing an incurable disease is challenging for them, but each takes a unique approach to living with the condition.

“There is no right way to battle metastatic breast cancer—just your way,” says Ajibade, who was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer (the most advanced stage) in 2006 and lost her mother to the disease.

Since her diagnosis, Ajibade has become an advocate for women living with metastatic breast cancer through Living Beyond Breast Cancer (LBBC) and a passionate believer in the power of sharing one’s story—a method that has helped her cope with her own reality.

“I have connected with stories from several women throughout my journey, and I want to share that sense of community with others,” says Ajibade. “You never know how many lives you’ll impact by speaking up.”

To help create awareness of metastatic breast cancer, Ajibade is encouraging women to participate in the nationwide #MBCStrength photo-sharing campaign. Women with metastatic breast cancer can post their photos on Twitter using the hashtag #MBCStrength to illustrate the word that unites each of them in their journey: strength. Photos posted on Twitter with #MBCStrength will be considered for a display in Times Square on October 13, 2014, Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day.

“People often wonder what it’s like to live with metastatic breast cancer. By participating in this campaign, we have the opportunity to showcase not just our challenges but also the love and support that guide us through our journeys,” says Ajibade.

Ajibade’s personal account is also featured at www.MyMBCStory.com, an educational website tailored for women with metastatic breast cancer developed by AstraZeneca with input from breast cancer advocacy organizations LBBC and Metastatic Breast Cancer Network. Her story is featured alongside that of Carey, who draws strength from expression through art and involvement in The Tutu Project, and Dzurich Ribera, whose per-



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sonal source of inspiration is her family.

“It’s important to not hold in your feelings. You have to find some avenue to express them,” says Carey, who was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2006.

Carey and her husband, Bob, created The Tutu Project—a collection of photos in which he wears a pink tutu—as a form of self-therapy. The project has resonated with many people around the globe and, 11 years later, the couple continues to raise funds for women with breast cancer and receive expressions of gratitude for the laughter their photos bring.

Following her metastatic breast cancer diagnosis, Dzurich Ribera feared that others would define her by her condition. While having her blood drawn one day, she shared this concern with another woman in treatment at the facility.

“I was desperately looking for a role model—someone who was doing well in spite of living with metastatic breast cancer,” says Dzurich Ribera. “I shared that feeling with her and she replied, ‘You have to be your own positive story.’ I know she was right and, through the ups and downs, that has always stuck with me.”

Ajibade, Carey and Dzurich Ribera are connected in their determination to help redefine what it means to live with metastatic breast cancer. Having helped many women through her advocacy work, Ajibade advises, “Each person living with metastatic breast cancer will find her own methods of coping, but one of the first steps we can take in this journey is to open up and share our stories.”