

## *Thank You!*

I humbly apologize for the delay in sending out my Thank You notes, but as you can imagine, I've had my hands quite full. This last 4 months has been a whirlwind of surgical procedures, emergency procedures, and transfusions and I've even spent a few days getting to "see" what it feels like to be blind, pardon the pun. In no way however does the delay trivialize my gratitude for your generosity. It's easy for people to say they'll help in situations like these, but it's another thing for them to actually do so.

While my health issues have been challenging, it's also been hard not to be out and about spending time with friends and not being able to meet those that have helped me despite the fact we've never met!

Some of you have donated monetarily, while others have donated their time or services and for each of these I am so very thankful.

Between your words of encouragement, phone calls, emails, etc. it's helped me to keep my chin up knowing that people care and that I haven't been forgotten.

When I had breast cancer a couple years ago, it gave me a new appreciation for life itself. This time around however, I have a new appreciation for people and their kindness.

Due to all your support, in whichever form it's been packaged, it's enabled me to focus more on the current medical issues and those that are certain to follow.

When talking with a nurse one day about my daughter being a bone marrow donor, the nurse explained the odds of my daughter being a match were very slim, in which case I stated that it seemed senseless to put her through the testing. The nurse then explained that in cases where the patient dies, that mentally it's beneficial to those that have donated, as they will live the rest of their lives, knowing they did something to try and help. Needless to say, each of you has helped in your own special way, for which I again Thank You and smile when I think about the fact that you will undoubtedly be rewarded in heaven someday!

Between my week long chemo injections and its aftermath, I've had very little time to myself. With my "free" time, I'm usually consumed by piles of paperwork, researching Leukemia, doing misc. items for the fundraising events, etc. Amidst this, I was so stressed about your Thank Yous not going out right away, that a couple people offered to do them for me. My initial goal was to hand write them all myself. Unfortunately, either my hospital stays didn't allow me the down time I expected, my writing wasn't legible due to all the drugs, or I was too exhausted. (So again I beg your forgiveness!) You'd think you could get sleep in a hospital... Instead I've been through a fire drill, people crying, 2 neighboring patients passing away, nurses taking stats at what seems like ridiculous intervals, phones ringing non-stop – half the time for the patients that were there before me and a slew of Doctors poking, prodding and using multiple instruments on me. Heck, the ever so stylish "butt-crack" gowns don't even faze me anymore, which ought to tell you something! LOL I just try to smile though realizing that it's all part of the process I have to endure to hopefully someday be able to spend time again with my family, and friends – both the new and old. (This wasn't a dig on anyone's age... lol)

So smile with me, hug someone today, enjoy the sunshine and say a little prayer for me if you would.

Hugs and Kisses,

*Suzanne*

## *2 Months Later...*

On May 22nd I underwent an Umbilical Cord Stem Cell Transplant. After 4 months of searching worldwide for a bone marrow donor with no luck things weren't looking so good as my body couldn't take much more chemo, so I was basically given 2 weeks. Then just in the nick of time the cords were found. As this is not as common of a surgery however, my odds of survival were far less. I believe I'm only the tenth person at the Moores cancer center to undergo this exact procedure and only 1 of 1300 worldwide.

Needless to say, I had a panel of Doctors working with and watching me. One of the cords ended coming from Spain while the other came from Chicago. The Spanish one was the anticipated one to take, but it ended up being the Chicago stem cells that took, so I'm now a Cubs fan!

Prior to doing the transplant it was necessary to kill all my cells via the chemo I'd had and then I received total body radiation that pretty much dropped me to my knees. I felt like the wicked witch in the Wizard of Oz as she was "melting".

For the next 77 days I was kept in a secluded hospital room. I now have an idea what it feels like to be a prisoner, with the exception that I was bed ridden and people were nice to me.

Anyhow, I was finally released to go home July 16<sup>th</sup> where for this 1<sup>st</sup> month I have to live in a bubble basically – no going into public places as I don't have back my immune system yet.

I go to the hospital 3 times a week for check ups and at home I have to have round the clock care.

I've recovered from all the accompanying diseases that go with this disease now with the exception of what's called Graft vs. Host. It's actually hoped for that you get this, just not too heavily. Again, I was blessed and have it at just the right amount. If you get it too badly, it will kill you and if only slightly, then your odds of getting Leukemia back in the future are far less. Basically, my body sees the other cells as foreign, so it tries to fight them off. To offset this, I take about 21 pills daily and get infusions twice a day.

I am learning to eat and walk again, my skin is recovering, my hair is just beginning to come back in and the other symptoms are beginning to heal as well.

So, in the end I Thank God for saving my life and all the miracles that had to occur for me to survive this ordeal, which I also could not have done without your support, so from The bottom of my heart, I THANK YOU!

*Suzanne*