

You've heard the story before...the one phone call changes your life forever.

From that point forward, your life is divided into before and after.

That's what cancer does.

We struggle to find our footing when the doctor calls to say they found a mass. Our lives never really go back to normal. We are now a cancer patient. And we are in the fight of our lives.

I'll never forget that phone call from our doctor telling my husband his CT scan showed a duodenal mass entangled with the mesentery artery.

This phone call was our before and after. Never to be the same. Always in the fight. Never recovering from that phone call.

Life with Cancer is an extraordinary organization in Fairfax, County, VA that offers support in every manner possible for any patient and their families going through cancer. As a volunteer for 20 years with Life with Cancer, I knew immediately that we had a support system at the ready. But I had no idea how comprehensive that support would be until we had to utilize it ourselves.

My husband and I went from volunteers to participants in a matter of hours. Our first call was from the nurse navigator who started the process by giving us doctor recommendations and strategies to put in place.

One of the scariest parts of being diagnosed with cancer, besides everything, is the immediate loss of control. That's what it feels like anyway. This point in the cancer journey is like a 1-2 punch to your psyche and emotional equilibrium.

Having Life with Cancer by our side was monumental. Eric, our nurse navigator was the calm in the storm and the strength that we were now lacking, but needed so desperately. His demeanor kept me calm.

I remember those initial phone calls with Eric. I didn't want to hang up the phone. He became our lifeline, our hope – like a warm blanket, as did all of Life with Cancer.

Feeling insulated at this crucial juncture in the cancer journey is paramount in so many ways. It allows you to regain some of that control because of the supported, educated, experienced collaboration you are now receiving from all the staff at Life with Cancer.

All services offered and provided by Life with Cancer are free. It relies on donations from generous supporters like you, who believe in their mission, but also who understands the enormous necessity of having resources available to patients and families going through the cancer.

All of us have been impacted by cancer. Whether it's directly, a family member, a friend, a neighbor or co-worker. Once we get the news, we are immediately thrust into the cancer process – even as spectators.

When we hear that a friend, neighbor or coworker is dealing with this diagnosis – everything in us is heightened: our worry, our compassion, and our empathy. We say endless prayers, we make meals, and we help wherever we can. We insulate. That's human nature, and it's a beautiful thing.

Life with Cancer especially insulates patients and their families so they do not feel so rudderless and isolated. There are programs for children, teens and adults. There is counseling, nutritionists on staff, a full resource library filled with the latest updates and information on cancer, classes and seminars, yoga and exercise classes and a warm blanket – always a warm blanket. That's what you feel when you arrive – that you are safe.

Corporations support Life with Cancer because so many times organizations assist their employees who are dealing with a cancer diagnosis. Businesses understand the benefits of having a resource like Life with Cancer for their workers. In addition to corporate support, donations are made up of every day people that have been affected by cancer. Those same people that appreciate the all-encompassing help and services that Life with Cancer has provided for themselves, their families or friends.

My husband passed away in 2011, sixteen months after that horrible phone call. My life was forever divided into a before and after. Cancer is one of the most trying times, and it certainly was for us. When he lost the fight, I was thrust into trying to hold everything together for our family, only now - I was

alone. Now I was dealing with shock and intense grief, the likes of which I could have never imagined. My family's worst fears were realized. And yet as dark as that time was, I live with amazing gratitude for everyone that helped us walk this walk. We were never alone. Life with Cancer was by our side.

It's been almost 10 years since my husband passed away. I still volunteer. But now I do it with an inherent understanding of the comprehensive support Life with Cancer provides for individuals and families. It was my lifeline. It was my rudder. And it was my warm blanket letting me know I was never alone. Support was always available.

Join us in supporting **Life with Cancer**, and experience the immense compassion of a group whose spirit is unconquerable, helping those that need it most fight a disease that doesn't always feel it can be conquered.

Everyone needs a resource to help walk the cancer journey. Life with Cancer is here to walk with you hand in hand.

Allow me to thank you personally for your generous donation. The support you give and those like you are the reason my husband, my family and I were able to navigate this difficult terrain with the help of Life with Cancer.

Sincerely,

Sharon Neff