



By Marion Behr, illustrator and collaborator of the newly published book, *Surviving Cancer: Our Voices and Choices*

Throughout our country, there are a number of organizations that provide assistance to and for cancer patients. Most of us are aware of the work achieved on the national level by CancerCare, Cancer Hope Network, the Sisters Network, Komen and The American Cancer Society. Our goal has been to focus mainly on community level achievements.

I was first introduced to a Cancer Hope Network chapter by Anne Johnston Ph.D. who simply said if you want to speak to someone at a wonderful organization just call Wanda Diak, she is local and the director of Cancer Hope Network, – so I did.

When Wanda answered the phone she projected HOPE – just what the organization is all about.

HOPE – what is it? To me it's that element that gives one the courage to think in the most positive, constructive way in order to move forward.

Wanda guided me to individuals who were active in the organization providing relief and hope for many patients. Ultimately, three members wrote for *Surviving Cancer: Our Voices & Choices*. Joe Wojtowicz described how the organization was founded in 1981 by Diane Byrnes-Paul, an oncology nurse, because her uncle, a cancer patient, described how beneficial it would have been for him to be able to speak with a survivor who had gone through a similar treatment. This comment was not new to Diane, since a number of her patients had expressed similar sentiments.

Anne Johnston frequently expressed her dedication to the organization and the comfort she gleaned from her “breast friends” as well as the satisfaction she derived from becoming an extremely active volunteer after her survivorship. Finally, Linda Kendler shared how valuable it was for her to speak with a Cancer Hope Network volunteer during her cancer struggle which had been heightened because of her fear of the disease.

She proceeded to detail why her interaction with a member from the Cancer Hope Network support team created her desire to become a volunteer and to help others by providing relief and hope. Linda described the sense of fulfillment that came from giving back and helping others. Through these articles it becomes clear that many individuals feel a sense of gratitude to Cancer Hope Network, its staff and volunteers.