

AMBASSADORS ANNOUNCED FOR 2017 SUPPORT-A-WALK



Support Connection, Inc. is proud to announce the selection of two **Walk Ambassadors** for this year's Annual Support-A-Walk for Breast And Ovarian Cancer which will take place on Sunday, October 1, 2017 (rain or shine) at FDR Park, Route 202, Yorktown Heights, NY. **Walk Ambassadors** are cancer survivors who represent the spirit and purpose of this uplifting annual event.

The Support-A-Walk is held to bring attention to the needs of people affected by breast and ovarian cancer and to raise funds for Support Connection's free counseling and other support services for those affected by these diseases. To donate, or to learn how to participate or fundraise, visit supportconnection.org, call 914-962-6402, or email walk@supportconnection.org

Our 2017 Support-A-Walk Ambassadors

SUE ANDERSEN: In May 2007, Sue went to see her gynecologist after noticing a lump in her breast. Her doctor shared her concern, so he sent her for testing and that's when Sue was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was only 37 years old at the time, with two young children: a 5 year old daughter Emma and a 7 year old son Peter.

Looking for support, Sue reached out to a friend who was a breast cancer survivor, and that friend suggested she call Support Connection: *"My first call led me straight to Andrea Karl (Support Connection Peer Counselor), the best facilitator, counselor and friend anyone could ask for. I would not be here today without the love and support of my family and friends, but Andrea is truly an angel who helped me through every step of treatment. I joined the Young Women's support group, which Andrea facilitated, and I continued attending for 3 years. Sometimes we met twice a month because there were so many women and so much to talk about."*

Sue adds: *"I felt like Support Connection was part of my treatment plan: Surgery, chemo, radiation and group. It was a place I could go and feel comfortable taking off my wig and talking about my treatments. Everyone was there to listen and Andrea made it easy to talk and share my story. In fact, Andrea inspired me to become a support group facilitator myself."* In 2012, Sue became a volunteer support group facilitator for Support Connection. She now facilitates 2 groups every month. Also, over the past 8 years Sue has attended numerous health fairs as a volunteer to share info about Support Connection with the community.

Sue attended her first Support-A-Walk in 2007 just a few months after her own diagnosis. Each year she has a Team called "Sue's Rack Pack" which consists of friends and family, including her husband Pete and their two children as well as her sister, 3 brothers and her parents. They raise funds together and walk together. This year, Sue and her Team will also walk in support of two other family members, both diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016: Sue's sister-in-law Lynn, diagnosed at age 57, and Sue's mom, Helen, diagnosed at age 80. Sue says: *"Participating in the Support-A-Walk is something everyone should*

do if they can, because everyone knows someone affected by cancer. It's a day in the park that's filled with compassion and love. It means so much to all of the cancer survivors and families who are there."

When asked to be a Walk Ambassador, Sue readily agreed: *"It's a great opportunity to spread the word in our community about the valuable services Support Connection offers to women and families affected by breast and ovarian cancer. We are so fortunate to have this wonderful organization right in our back yard. I'm happy to share my story about how Support Connection helped me so more people can learn about it and get the support they need."*

ILENE COHEN: Ilene was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 1994 when she was 49 years old. She had no history of cancer in her family and her cancer was discovered almost by accident: *"I really didn't notice anything except I was developing a little pot belly. I thought, well, I'm 49 years old, maybe my weight is redistributing. I don't think I was gaining any weight, but my pants were getting tighter."* The only other sign she noticed was more frequent urination. She reported these things to her gynecologist during her routine annual check-up. Fortunately, her doctor acted quickly, did a test which showed evidence of a pelvic growth, and got Ilene into surgery soon after. Ilene had a complete hysterectomy, including removal of her ovaries. Pathology confirmed the diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

While coping with her diagnosis and six rounds of chemo, Ilene was also a mom concerned with the needs of her teenage children. Her son was almost 16; her daughter was 18 and about to head off to college. Ilene didn't know anyone who'd had ovarian cancer, and Support Connection had not yet been established. It was a lot to handle: *"It would have been nice to have Support Connection",* Ilene says. *"I had a very supportive family, but with Support Connection I would have had someone comfortable to call, and they would have been able to give me answers to the questions I had."*

In 1996, Ilene received a postcard announcing the Support-A-Walk as well as the opening of Support Connection's office. Knowing she'd be out of town for the Walk, Ilene visited the office to make a donation and to inquire about volunteering. And volunteer she has: Since 1996, Ilene has volunteered at the office an average of 8-15 hours every week. Many weeks she gives more time to help with special events and projects. It's a huge investment of time and talent, which Ilene is happy to do: *"After being through cancer, and not knowing if you're going to live or die, you feel so relieved and fortunate. I wanted to give back and help others in the same situation."*

Ilene has participated in almost every Support-A-Walk since 1997. Joined by family and friends, her Team "Friends of Ilene" walks and raises funds together. Ilene says: *"I'd encourage all survivors, their friends and families to come to this uplifting event. There's such a feeling of encouragement, hope and belonging. Everyone understands what you've been through. It's a healing experience for everyone, seeing thousands of people coming together for a meaningful cause."* Ilene adds: *Support Connection provides help in so many ways. By participating in the Walk and raising funds, we can help to insure they can continue their work.*

Ilene is happy to be a Walk Ambassador: *"Support Connection is an amazing organization. I'd like to help in any way I can, to spread the word and let people know about the help they offer to women dealing with breast or ovarian cancer. It's so important for people to be aware of the support that they or their loved ones can receive during a very difficult and frightening time. The caring counselors at Support Connection are there to help."* She adds: *"I'm very proud to be a part of this organization, to share my story and to encourage and inspire other survivors."*