Meryl Kern Starts Survivorship Program To Help Other Women With Breast Cancer

When Meryl Kern was diagnosed with breast cancer last year, she realized there were a lot of issues that weren't being addressed for women going through chemotherapy and other types of cancer treatment. She decided to fill the gap.

The result is the Meryl Kern Survivorship Program and the Blush Panel Series, underwritten by her and her husband Russell, and now administered by Tower Cancer Research Foundation (TCRF).

"When I used to go in for treatment, I chose to hide myself. And by that I mean I chose to look in the mirror, apply foundation to my rather grey pallor, draw on my eyebrows, did my eyes the best I could (It's hard when you have no eyelashes, but I learned a few tricks of the trade) and got dressed with all the femininity I could muster," relates Kern.

"I needed to retain my dignity and I wanted to have control over what was going on the outside. I couldn't control my body; so that was the way I handled it. I wanted to walk into the infusion room holding my head high and feeling glamorous and in control."

"It seemed women who were getting treatment were curious about who I was," remembers Kern. "I was asked if I was really sick. Was I really wearing a wig? How was I getting through this emotionally? So if these women were asking, how many more women across LA were asking the same questions?"

"I begin to think that something was missing in how we see ourselves and though we couldn't change how many infusions we were to receive, we could change how we looked and how we felt," Kern says.

She became aware of many issues she wished were addressed. "There was a lot of talk on acute care, but nothing on post care," Kern says.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful to educate, support, and provide women going through treatment an opportunity to look and feel their best?" asked Kern.

Kern was always supportive of TCRF, attending its annual gala as well as the organization’s Spirit of Hope Luncheon. But she became even more involved after her diagnosis. "When I approached Nancy Miskin (TCRF board chair) and Linda David (TCRF executive director) they embraced the program," reports Kern. "They thought it was a wonderful idea and were extremely supportive."

"Tower Cancer Research Foundation is the Meryl Kern Survivorship Program and the Blush Panel Series will provide educational and intimate discussions. "We will be providing conversations with top physicians, surgeons and psychological professionals in a safe, comfortable environment, as well as medical and beauty services to those who can't afford it."

"The first in the series will be held 6 - 8 p.m., Thursday, March 31 at TCRF's new location, 5767 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 401, Beverly Hills. Featured presenters will include Dr. Robert Katz, F.A.C.O. Obstetrics and Gynecology at Women's Care of Beverly Hills discussing The MonaLisa Touch, a laser therapy used to treat changes in vaginal health often caused by menopause. I can also be used to treat similar side effects in women who have undergone a hysterectomy or breast-cancer treatments. Dr. Robert Katz performs this procedure and will discuss the benefits for a healthy sex life."

"Prominent breast reconstruction surgeon Dr. Jay Orringer discussing techniques to achieve the most natural result possible in the mastectomy setting.

Betsy Goodkin MFT, discussing a psychotherapeutic approach utilizing techniques from mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy to help women deal with the stress of emotional and behavioral issues associated with cancer."

Kern will moderate and "speak from knowledge and from the heart," she says, "touching on all the things that touched me." The program, "more of a discussion than a lecture, will give women a safe environment to talk about what they're going through and get information and answers from health-care professionals."

"Tower Cancer Research Foundation is proud to be able to offer this provocative series," said David. "It's time for the topics of the Blush Panel to emerge from the whispers in dark corners and into the light for open discussion. We are grateful to the Kerns for their generous donation and their willingness to fund this much-needed program."

At last week's open house for TCRF's new home and celebrating its 20th year, Kern spoke about this new program, and the response was, "wow, this is something we really need," said Kern. "What people don't understand is that once you're done with chemotherapy or radiation, people often think that suddenly you're all better. It takes a year or two before your body cleanses itself of all those poisons."

"When you're in treatment, you're in the safest place you can be. But when that treatment is over, you are often left feeling quite alone," says Kern. "My hope is to help other women get the answers to the many personal and intimate questions they might have, and to survive cancer with dignity, beauty and inner strength," Kern adds.

The evening is free, but reservations are required. For more information or to register, call 310-399-8470, email info@towercancer.org or visit http://towercancer.org/facialsurvive.