10 Things Breast Cancer Taught Me
British author shares tips like “Go hippie”

Hope Springs Eternal
Women worldwide will keep this new breast form close to their hearts

You Are Unique
And so is your breast cancer—landmark discovery

Row, Row, Row Her Boat
One woman’s remarkable solo around Lake Michigan
Feature

Inspiring Hope Eternal
Artist Annette Girke’s love of the ocean inspires a special new breast form and our breast cancer awareness pin for 2012.

In every issue

News & Reviews — A breast cancer breakthrough; a trip around Lake Michigan; must reads; and more.

By-the-Numbers — Breast cancer around the world.

Professional Portrait — Jennifer Merschdorf: Leading the nation’s premier resource and support group for young breast cancer survivors.

Survivor Portrait — Christine Clifford: Breast cancer became her inspiration for creativity, compassion and career success.

Mind & Body — 10 Things Breast Cancer Taught Me

Feelin’ Kinda Funny — Dianne remembers her first experience with Thai massage.

Shapes your curves perfectly

During tissue expansion you want to maintain your silhouette, but how do you find a solution that will work with your changing shape, protect sensitive skin and give you the look and feel of a natural breast?

The Answer?
Ameno PurFit Adjustable Enhancer

Visit our store locator at www.amoena.us or call 1-800-741-0078.

“It is difficult waking up from surgery different. You know the end result will be beautiful, but you still have a process to go through before you get there. I found that the Amoena PurFit adjustable enhancer was a wonderful way for me to bridge this gap. It enabled me to conceal the expansion process by providing a silhouette that was representative of my end result. Through fluctuating sizes and varying degrees of discomfort, I felt confident, I felt feminine and I felt normal.”

Kristine, 42

The entire contents of this publication are copyrighted by Amoena, Kennesaw, GA, USA 2012. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of the contents in any manner is strictly prohibited without prior written permission from the publisher. Amoena Life magazine is published twice a year and is available by request. Amoena Life magazine is distributed to subscribers, retailers and medical facilities. No liability for unsolicited manuscripts. Amoena cannot be liable for pictorial or typographical errors. While every effort is taken to ensure the information contained in this magazine is accurate, the publisher cannot be held responsible for any use or reliance on the accuracy of such information. Any information provided is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you have a health problem, you should consult your doctor. The editor reserves the right to edit or abridge submissions.
editor’s letter

Join Jenn and Help Row, Row, Row Her Boat

On June 15, a brave young woman launched a boat onto Lake Michigan. The boat, Liv— the Norwegian word for “life”—will be Jenn Gibbons’ home away from home and her only companion during a solo attempt to circle the entire 1,500-mile perimeter of the Lake, all in support of breast cancer survivors. Gibbons, 27, founder and coach of Recovery on Water (ROW), a Chicago rowing team for women who have been through breast cancer, is pursuing this challenge to raise both awareness and funding for her club, which is ready to expand its programs. Studies have proven that exercise can reduce the risk of cancer recurrence by 50 percent. Of course, the team provides survivors with much more than a regular exercise regimen; ROW is a community of friends working toward worthwhile goals, supporting one another, and Gibbons is hopeful that it can grow to include other cities in the future.

She will row 10 hours a day this summer, stopping only to sleep and to share the mission of ROW at awareness and fundraising events in port towns along the shore. Her seaworthy boat is self-righting and has braved 30-foot waves and hurricanes. A sealed cabin will provide enough space to sleep and to take cover during storms.

“Lake Michigan is like an ocean in many ways, and can be very unpredictable,” Jenn says. “But we have some great volunteers, experts in all their fields, so I’m really fortunate. The perception is that it’s just me and the boat, but it’s not, really. We have a fantastic team working to make the trip successful.”

If you want to help buoy up this extraordinary adventure—or to meet Jenn en route—visit www.row4ROW.org. There you can donate, and find out where Jenn and Liv are through online maps and live blog posts.

“...and worldwide hope.”
It’s one thing to wear a pink ribbon for “breast cancer awareness.” But it’s another thing entirely to educate women worldwide—to make them aware of how a lump actually feels. In 2002, the creator of WorldwideBreastCancer.com conducted a survey and found that more than half of respondents did not know how a breast cancer lump feels, so she set out to change that.

Her website is a visual treat, using a bright yellow lemon as a metaphor for the breast—it’s universally recognized, not prone to censorship as a real breast might be, particularly in some countries, and actually quite similar to the anatomy of the breast.

Visual imagery is incredibly important in global health education, for many reasons:

- It’s estimated that 1 in 5 patients have literacy issues;
- Typical health documents are wordy and therefore not read;
- Written information in one language can be a problem for educating multicultural audiences.

The lemon, and the whimsical “Mayor”—a drawing of a woman with whom people of all nationalities can identify—are solving those problems. From the website: “By using a friendly metaphor to open the discussion, the opportunities to communicate go beyond language, education and culture and truly have the potential to connect globally.”

Worldwide Breast Cancer is looking for volunteer translators, breast cancer experts, programmers, benefactors and others who are passionate about spreading hard facts beyond the pink ribbon. Visit worldwidebreastcancer.com and get the whole picture!

**For Your Bookshelf**

**Confronting Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer**

By Sue Friedman, DiM, Rebecca Sulphor, MD, and Kathy Steligo

This well-researched book is an incredibly non-user-manual for someone who suspects, or has confirmed, a hereditary predisposition to breast or ovarian cancer. Confronting Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer calls that experience “living in a high-risk body,” and addresses it with authoritative yet meaningful understanding. With the inclusion of personal stories from previvors, survivors, experts and family members, it reads easily and provides comfort as well as comprehensive information for those facing an uncertain future. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.)

**Busted! The Fab Foundations™ Guide to Bras that Fit, Flatter and Feel Fantastic**

By Ali Cudby

If you dread shopping for new bras, this little book is for you. Author and bra coach Ali Cudby has been in your straps, and she’s out to change the fitting room scene. Her “Fab Fit™ Formula” is a new way to think about your body and your bras, and it works. (One tip: Don’t get stuck on one size for every bra you own.) Cudby shares some industry secrets, myth-busters and body-image gems that will straighten both your outlook and your posture, whether you’re an A-cup or a double-J. Her website is FabFoundations.com. (Journey Grrrl Publishing, 2011.)

**Laugh ‘Til It Heals**

By Christine Clifford

Speaker and humorist Christine Clifford (please see her story on p. 11) has once again reminded us: “Don’t Forget to Laugh!” in her latest book of personal anecdotes, letters and essays. The gift of hundreds of cards and notes from survivors around the world, has continually arrived in her mailbox, and she says their stories have given her laughter over the years, which helped her move forward after her breast cancer diagnosis. This is a book to keep in your purse for waiting rooms and coffee breaks, or to give to a newly-diagnosed friend. Short snippets will definitely lighten the mood. (Anshan Ltd., 2012.)

**What’s happening in a Woman’s World**

Every five years, the United Nations publishes *The World’s Women*, a document of trends and statistics on the status of women throughout the world—from families, health, education, work, environment and more. The purpose is to measure if the commitment of the participating governments at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women is being fulfilled to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity. Here are just a few interesting discoveries from the 2010 edition.

**Breast Cancer**

Breast cancer tops the list of new cancer cases worldwide.

**Life Expectancy**

Life expectancy is steadily rising, with women living longer than men.

**Education**

Most countries have seen a rise in the average percentage of women enrolled in higher education institutions.

**Internet Use**

Access to the internet has grown steadily since 2000, with the gender divide narrowing, but men still have more access.

Average percentage of women with internet access.

---

**Amoena women around the world**

A few of the lovely faces around the world who call Amoena “friend.”

**Suzanne**

3 year survivor

Canada

**Anna**

7 year survivor

U.K.

**Julia**

19 year survivor

Australia

**Martine**

10 year survivor

France

**Leonie**

25 year survivor

Australia
We talk to artist and sculptor, Annette Girke—a designer of the Hope Eternal Contact breast form and 2012 breast cancer awareness pin—about her inspiration for art and life.

Born in Bamburg, Germany, in 1965, Annette Girke comes from a creative family. Her father owned a business that manufactured compression stockings and she remembers him always hard at work in his studio, inventing new products and processes, many of which became patented designs. Her mother was a tailor, who also loved to knit.

The odds were against a creative career when her application to study fashion design at an elite university was denied. Coping with this rejection was difficult, and represented a setback in Annette’s plans. “I felt like I had a mental mountain to climb if I was ever going to have the confidence to try again,” she admits. However, her parents were almost relieved because now she was open to consider a commercial venture. “I rented a studio for two years and went along and thoroughly enjoyed it—so much so that she was convinced that she could be here for years to come. And that was what inspired me to use them in my art and life.”

Making time for art
In 2001 the family moved to Lamburg, Germany, where Annette met a new acquaintance who invited her to join a sculpture class. “I wasn’t sure I’d like it because I didn’t think sculpture was quite my thing,” she confesses. However, she went along and thoroughly enjoyed it—so much so that she soon started making sculptures at home. Before long, friends were asking to buy her work.

In 2007, Annette decided she was ready to make a concerted effort at turning her creative prowess into a commercial venture. “I rented a studio for two years and focused as much energy as I could on it,” she says. After the two-year trial, she was convinced that she could be successful, so she enrolled in a painting course to further expand her knowledge. Although that was only three years ago, such has been Annette’s success that she is now being asked to teach sculpture classes herself.

Now with three children, it’s amazing that Annette finds the time and energy for her art. “I try to get into the studio two or three times a week, and I often work at home in the evenings, once the children are in bed. I try to be disciplined but often, when I’m ‘in the zone’, I can find myself working until the early hours!”

Creativity isn’t something that can be turned on and off at will, and it’s sometimes difficult for Annette to get started. “A typical day in the studio starts with me organizing my space to give me a ‘blank canvas.’ When I feel the time is right, I get started. When I’m in the groove, I call it a ‘flow of luck’ and I try to make the most of it!”

Annette’s artwork integrated into the back layer.

The path to healing
Annette found a lump when she stopped breastfeeding Fritz, but her gynecologist told her not to worry because this was quite normal. However, it was still there six months later, so she underwent tests and was diagnosed with invasive breast cancer. She had breast-conserving surgery followed by radiation and chemotherapy.

She found out early that taking a holistic approach to healing helped her. “I needed to believe that cancer was not the enemy and needed to be accepted before I could motivate my body to get healthy again. This mindset was important to my total healing,” she says.

However, Annette’s struggles weren’t over—in 2007 she found a lump in the scar of her previous surgery site. “I knew immediately what it was,” she remembers. Because this was a recurrence, she had to have a full mastectomy this time and, faced with a 30 percent chance that cancer would also occur in her remaining breast, she opted for a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction. “I know it was the right decision,” she says. “And I’m still here to tell the tale!”

Contemplating eternity
The concept of eternity inspired Annette’s design for the new Amoena Contact breast form. “I love the beach and find it a calm, peaceful and positive place,” she explains. “I often come to the coast to reflect and restore my sense of balance during times of stress—like when I was going through my breast cancer treatment and just before the annual MRI scans that I now have to undergo.” She has always loved seashells. “I see them as a symbol of eternity. They have been here for decades, they are with us now and they will be here for years to come. And that was what inspired me to use them in my design for this new breast form.”

Despite the challenges of a double diagnosis, and the setbacks that she overcame before beginning her career as an artist, Annette has arrived where she wants to be. Her advice to other women is to fully inhabit the moment. “Live for today and not for tomorrow is what I say. Life is not a rehearsal.”

For a limited time, Amoena is offering a special edition Hope Eternal Contact Comfort+ lightweight breast form with Annette’s artwork integrated into the back layer.

Amoena will donate 100 percent of the net proceeds from the pin to breast cancer support organizations around the world.

To find a retailer near you, visit our store locator at www.amoena.us or call 1-800-741-0078.

The endurance of shells, the calming effects of the sea: Nature strengthens breast cancer survivors around the world with hope and peace.
In 2010, breast cancer gave Jennifer Merschdorf a sort of double whammy. Until then, breast cancer wasn’t even a blip on her radar, but in January of that year her mother was diagnosed, and just seven months later, so was Jennifer. She credits her mother’s diagnosis with helping her pay more attention to her own body, thereby realizing she needed to take action when she discovered a lump.

“I was very forceful with my doctors,” shares Merschdorf. “A lot of young women struggle because their doctors say they are too young. I was able to find my breast cancer while it was at Stage 1. Since I had some positive lymph node involvement, I did a bilateral mastectomy right away, also because of my mom’s diagnosis. If it hadn’t been for her, I probably wouldn’t have been as decisive in my actions.

“When I was diagnosed, my husband and I wrote an email saying, ‘If you know anybody that is young and has been diagnosed, can you please introduce them to us?’ We sent that message out as far and wide as our networks would go and by that first weekend I had 13 women around the country who helped me through it. Every single one of them said my next step needed to be getting in touch with the Young Survival Coalition (YSC). That advice was invaluable to me.”

Although her career had begun in the corporate world of marketing and sales, Jennifer transitioned her skills to the nonprofit arena, fueled by her desire to create social change. Not surprisingly, she feels she was destined for her current work. “The night I decided I wasn’t going to do chemo, I saw the job posting, and I began working for YSC eight months after my diagnosis. A lot of people have asked me if jumping into a new career was a struggle because their doctors say they are too young. I was able to find my breast cancer while it was at Stage 1. Since I had some positive lymph node involvement, I did a bilateral mastectomy right away, also because of my mom’s diagnosis. If it hadn’t been for her, I probably wouldn’t have been as decisive in my actions.

“Leading the nation’s premier resource and support group for young breast cancer survivors”

Meet Jennifer Merschdorf
CEO, Young Survival Coalition

Meet Christine Clifford
Author, Speaker and Storyteller

Breast cancer became Christine’s inspiration for creativity, compassion and career success

Christine quickly harnessed her creative energy, her life experiences, her humor and her determination not to let breast cancer get the upper hand. In the process she has made a better life for herself and other women.

Not only has she contributed to several of the books in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, she is also the author of: YOU, Inc. The Art of Selling Yourself; Cancer Has Its Privileges: Stories of Hope and Laughter; Inspiring Breakthrough Secrets to Live Your Dreams; Our Family Has Cancer, Too!; Not Now, I’m Having a No Hair Day; Humor & Healing for People with Cancer; Your Guardian Angel’s Gift; and most recently, Laugh ‘Til It Heals.

Some people would be worn out just trying to keep up with her, but Christine thrives on challenges and reaching out to others, so it’s no surprise she is also the founder of The Cancer Club® (CancerClub.com), which today is the world’s largest producer of humorous and helpful products for people dealing with cancer.

Christine isn’t just a multi-tasker, she’s a multi-thriver! Her horizon includes plans to star in a Hollywood-made documentary, and she is also shifting her focus a bit and working to help people share their stories.

“My breast cancer experience shaped my entire personality and destiny. It’s been more than 18 years since my diagnosis,” says Clifford, “and I really feel like it was a gift for me, personally. It opened some creative avenues I never knew I had. Writing books, public speaking, starting the Cancer Club… None of that would have happened if I hadn’t been diagnosed with cancer. I credit all of my success to this life event.”
10 Things Breast Cancer Taught Me

Often, a life-threatening experience like breast cancer can leave you with a different outlook and changes the way you view things—from life’s various trials to the most trivial day-to-day experiences. We asked U.K. author and two-time breast cancer survivor, Sharon Morrison, to share her own particular insights.

Let people in
Being open about my cancer was the cue my friends and family needed to get involved. No, they weren’t coming to my home to do the housework (which is a shame, really), but they kept in touch every month by phone, card, letter, email and the occasional visit. They even ran races for me and had prayers said at Mass. By my deliberately externalizing my feelings, they knew they could show theirs, and we were all the better for it.

...Especially your kids
My children were 8, 10 and 14 when I first had cancer, and I decided that keeping them in the loop from the beginning was the best way of avoiding a bigger problem later on. The best thing I did was to appoint my sister as the official sounding board so they always had someone else to turn to, and, crucially, they could ask her everything they felt they couldn’t ask me. They were with me too when I had chemotherapy, so they could see it wasn’t remotely scary.

Get your beauty sleep
After a few weeks of looking and feeling like a zombie, I nipped the chronic insomnia that seems to accompany chemotherapy in the bud and took sleeping pills. I was prescribed zopiclone, which is a hypnotic drug (which means it induces sleep without affecting your mood or sensitivity to pain), and it’s non-addictive.

I’d wake up feeling much more refreshed, so I gave it a try. In fact I had reflexology the day before every chemo session and regard it as a major contributory factor in helping me cope as well as I did, both physically and mentally.

...but don’t gain weight
You’d think you’d at least lose weight but, first time round, I gained a stone [around 14 pounds] which took 12 months to shift. This year, when I was having treatment, I decided to see if gentle exercise would stop the weight gain before it started. I began walking, then jogging very, very slowly around the block, eventually building up to three miles a day. I didn’t gain weight; I lost it, but all the time feeling healthier and more energetic. So I haven’t stopped.

Shock your taste buds
I didn’t lose my sense of taste exactly, it’s just that chemo makes food taste odd, metallic, unpleasant. My way around this was to choose comforting food that reminded me of childhood, like fish fingers and mashed potato; or that went “Kapow!” on my tongue, like lime juice and soda water, and gingernut biscuits dunked in tea.

Go hippie
I didn’t know very much about reflexology but had heard it had been helpful to others in handling the side effects of treatment. To be honest, anything involving having your toes fiddled with for an hour has got to be good, so I gave it a try. In fact I had reflexology the day before every chemo session and I decided to get my eyebrows tattooed on. It’s a semi-permanent procedure and you need to be refreshed once a year, but it’s a big difference to me, and mentally thank my tattooist every morning when I look in the mirror.

Embrace the grey
When my hair started to grow again, steel grey in places, white in others, I decided NOT to reach for the hair dye. As much as I wanted to go back to the security of medium-golden-brown-with-caramel-highlights, I thought I should take advantage of my situation and turn a potentially aging hairstyle into a short, funky look. Yes, there were a few double-takes initially, but I’m happy with my new style and there are no roots to retouch—bliss.

Even the eyebrows?
Sad! My eyebrows didn’t grow back and this made me look tired and washed out all the time. After months of penciling them in, I decided to get my eyebrows tattooed on. It’s a semi-permanent procedure and you need to refresh them in about 12 months. I didn’t know very much about it or how it worked, but it’s made a big difference to me and I can feel my eyebrows every morning when I look in the mirror.

Don’t let employers get you down
When you’ve got breast cancer, the last thing you should need to do is ‘watch your back’ at work, but, as I found out first hand, not all employers behave with integrity. Some will exploit every opportunity to undermine you at the most difficult time in your life, and, although it will seem hard, you have to fight back. I found the very act of making a stand and confronting my employer, despite being petrified, made me feel stronger and more confident.

Nothing’s THAT important
An experience like this changes you on the inside. I’m definitely more at ease with myself now. I can cry in front of strangers and not feel ashamed; I can handle difficult situations with calm; I can lean on those who used to lean on me. But, most of all, I’m just glad that I’m still on this planet and can continue to embarrass my kids—and, occasionally, make them feel proud of the journey we’ve been on together.

Don’t Miss This
Sharon’s book, Even the Eyebrows?, is a jargon-free, practical guide for everyone who’s been diagnosed with cancer. It takes you all the way from the first heartbeat-pumping-in-ears realization that you might just possibly have a lump in your breast, to the first fantastic cup of tea when your taste buds finally return. It is available on Amazon.com. More information, including the author’s blog, is at www.eventheeyebrows.com.
Recently, I had the pleasure of spending time with two very dear old friends. Since our reconnect coincided with my birthday, they decided to treat me to a Thai massage. I was a bit hesitant at first, but after they assured me they, too, would be getting massages, I agreed. After all, who am I to turn down some free and ever-so-relaxing body work? As we drove to the spa, my friend Georgia told me a bit more about what, exactly, a Thai massage entails. She said that a very small Thai woman would bend my body into positions that would ensure my “juices were flowing.” I was delighted to learn we would be fully clothed, because the idea of being naked and twisted just holds no appeal for me whatsoever.

Georgia is also a breast cancer survivor and is elated to have reached her five year cancer-free mark. She realizes this doesn’t guarantee she is cured, but the further we are from a diagnosis, the better our odds. Georgia was close to Stage IV cancer, so she is acutely aware she needs to be vigilant regarding her wellbeing. She does a bit of guided meditation, as well as taking the restorative nap and even the celebratory glass of bubbly when it’s warranted.

So, at the spa, Georgia, Susan and I were ushered into a lovely waiting area with calming fountains, beautiful statues and ethereal music. I immediately felt my tension and apprehension fade away. We were told to change out of our clothes into their massage garb, which was pretty amusing. I have yet to find a “one size fits all” that lives up to its word. Fits all what? That’s my question.

There was no table—just a large mat on a platform, surrounded on all sides by flowing curtains. My masseuse positioned a pillow on the mat that was supposed to allow me to lie on my stomach without crushing my breasts. What it did not provide was a way for me to breathe. I spent much of my hour trying not to gasp audibly, and hoping to remain conscious. On the other hand, there were moments when unconsciousness might have been a blessing!

Here’s a math problem for you: How can an itty bitty woman inflict pain comparable to having an elephant stomp on you? I was amused, when I was able to think at all, that she continually said, “Tell me if I’m hurting you.” With my face buried in the mat, I’m sure it was hard for her to tell if I was screaming in pain or laughing hystericly.

This was not the peaceful me-time I’d bargained for. But here’s the amazing thing: When it was over, I felt like I’d slept for days. My body was so relaxed and refreshed, I felt better than I have in ages. Granted, I looked like I’d been shot out of a cannon, but so did my two girlfriends!

Would I do it again? You bet. If not for the amazing results, I’d do it just for the cup of tea and other little goodies they leave in the room at the end of the hour. Now that’s the kind of body work I can really appreciate.”
Amoena’s Valletta Pocketed Camisole Collection.


To find an Amoena retailer near you, visit the store locator at www.amoena.us or call 1-800-741-0078.

Plum Perfect
So comfortable, you’ll want more than one.

www.amoena.us

©2012. All rights reserved. Amoena USA Corporation, GA 30144-4510, Kennesaw, USA. Amoena is a registered trademark of Amoena Medizin-Orthopädie-Technik GmbH.