

This year, the Village Walk for Cancer Research is recognizing and honoring a special person, Bonnie Kierstyn. If you have ever been to an event at the Community of Joy Lutheran Church in the Village, you probably ran into Bonnie Kierstyn. Bonnie is a Charter member of the church and a four time cancer survivor. She was born in Racine WI, the oldest of twelve children (four brothers and seven sisters). Her father ran a small restaurant and her mom worked at St. Lukes in the cafeteria and nursery. Bonnie has fond memories of helping to raising her siblings while her parents worked to provide for their family. Bonnie worked at Hamilton Beach and Horlic Malted Milk companies before working for her dad at the restaurant, Leo and Pearl's for seven years.

After that, she worked at different offices in the area where she met the man of her dreams, Wally, and got married. Bonnie and Wally wanted children but after two tubal pregnancies and two miscarriages, it wasn't to be. Instead, she showered her love on her many nieces and nephews. Bonnie continued to work and after many years of managing Channing's Fine Dining, she finally was a co-owner. She loved to hostess and meet people. Bonnie retired in 1995 and moved to HSV in 1997 with her husband to enjoy the good life.

Bonnie's first cancer was discovered in 2007, a squamous mass on her lip which was successfully removed. In July 2010, Bonnie was eating chicken wings while watching a Packers preseason game and felt a lump in her breast while brushing off crumbs. She met with her doctor who later confirmed that it was Stage 2 breast cancer. She elected to have chemotherapy and radiation at the Mercy Cancer Clinic in Hot Springs. Bonnie never told her husband that she had breast cancer because she didn't want him to worry about her. Wally had several strokes and Bonnie was his caregiver. After her surgery, Bonnie's arm became swollen and she was diagnosed with lymphedema which put her back in the hospital for three days to get the swelling down before she could start chemotherapy. She lost her hair during treatment and wasn't able to go to church as her immune system was compromised. Her church family came to her and helped her during this time. Bonnie received shots in the belly and Neutropenia as part of her treatment. Bonnie spoke to her pastor and they worked out an arrangement where someone would bring Bonnie (wearing a mask) to church and she would not have any interaction with any of the other members. She was able to attend service and feed her soul with the word of God.

In October 2010, Bonnie was diagnosed with a lymphoma and went through more treatment. In 2011, her radiologist spotted another lump in the same area in the same breast while doing a routine mammogram. Bonnie was surprised since she was getting mammograms every six months. This put her back in the hospital, another lumpectomy, chemo and radiation. She lost her hair again and often wore hats. This time it was invasive ductal carcinoma. And once again, she had to go back for shots of Filgrastim for osteoporosis. Her second round of chemo and radiation ended in March 2013. Bonnie continues to make regular trips to her doctor, has regular mammograms and blood work. She still has a port which gets flushed every three months. She considers herself cancer free for now.

Bonnie put her sweet husband in a nursing home in August 2011 as she couldn't provide the care he needed at home any longer. Wally died January 12, 2012 while Bonnie was going through her breast cancer treatment. All this time, she cared for him while caring for herself. She smiled and said that he never once asked her about her hair.

Bonnie kept a positive attitude during this time and doesn't worry about things. She is thankful for her church family who helped with meals and other chores at home. She is most thankful that she feels well enough to volunteer at her church serving on different committees Missions, Evangelism and Fellowship. She coordinates Love Lunches in Hot Springs and takes ice cream, puzzles, clothes and other items to the veterans in Little Rock. She saves pop tops and sends to the Sentinel Records for Children's Hospital to the Ronald McDonald house to help pay for housing for family members. Bonnie enjoys the Village and would never leave. Her advice is to eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of water, and keep a positive attitude and most of all, stay strong in your faith.

As a four time cancer survivor, Bonnie believes in cancer research and has supported the Village Walk for Cancer Research for the past eight years. You can also help us help others by getting involved in this year's walk. The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Village Walk for Cancer Research begins at 7:30 a.m. (rain or shine) on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup> at the Balboa Pavilion, 476 Ponce de Leon Drive. You will find sponsorship and walker registration forms on our website [walkforcancerreach.org](http://walkforcancerreach.org). The early registration fee is \$30 and goes up to \$35 after September 1<sup>st</sup>. Each walker registration includes a t-shirt. Our goal this year is to raise \$50,000 for the Palliative Care Program. Plan on joining us as we celebrate the lives of cancer survivors and remember and honor those who have lost their lives to the disease. You can make a difference by helping us help others! For more information, contact Melanie Pederson at 608-692-0458 (cell) or email [chairman@walkforcancerresearch.org](mailto:chairman@walkforcancerresearch.org).