

DeMATTEO: The Lebed Method—it has nothing to do with what you're thinking

Sunday, October 19, 2008 3:23 AM EDT

By Ann DeMatteo

Editor's note: This is the 11th installment of Assistant Metro Editor Ann DeMatteo's columns about her breast cancer.

There are angels and heroes all over the place for those of us who are either in the throes of breast cancer or for those who've survived it.

One of the big heroes, a pioneer in the survivorship fight, was in our midst last weekend.

Special Section: Living with Cancer

Sherry Lebed Davis, creator of a therapeutic form of exercise for survivors of breast cancer and other illnesses called the Lebed Method, traveled from Washington state to Quinnipiac University to teach healthcare professionals about the gentle movement program.

One of my favorite angels, Miss Connecticut 2008 Ashley Glenn, a physical therapy doctorate student at Quinnipiac University, is already trained in the method and was able to hone her skills while spending the weekend with Davis, one of her very own heroes. Ashley's community service platform for the Miss America competition focuses on healing through the movement and dance of the Lebed Method.

Flashback to June 28, 2008. I am a newly diagnosed breast cancer patient, watching the 80th anniversary Miss Connecticut Scholarship Pageant in New London. When Ashley is announced as the winner, I start to sob, knowing that God picked her because she's going to help me through my breast cancer.

As a member of the Miss Connecticut Board of Directors, I have better access to this state's Miss America contestant than most people, and I know that one day I will be part of her classes in the Lebed Method. So last Sunday, I pry myself from my morning puttering and end up doing more exercise than I've done in years, while I get a sneak peek into the tail-end of the workshop taught by Davis, with assistance from Ashley and other class members.

According to Ashley, the warm-up in this program is very important. "You need a lymphatic opening," she said, so we start with some deep breathing that comes from blowing bubbles.

One of the main aims of the program is to help people with Lymphedema, swelling of the arm or other parts of the body that can result when lymph nodes are removed. The exercises, similar to those used by Lymphedema therapists, help to move fluid by getting the lymphatic vessels pumping. The painless program also helps range of motion, relieves frozen shoulder, gently stretches scar tissue and improves self-esteem.

From breathing, we move to head rolls and arm movements, then leg stretches, and then some easier dance steps that even this klutz more or less followed. I worked up a little bit of a sweat and felt good, despite the occasional light-

headedness. I became convinced that the program could help me drop a few pounds, in an effort to keep the cancer from coming back.

It was a pleasure to talk to Sherry, a spunky 14-year breast cancer survivor who with her two doctor brothers, started the program for their mother, who had breast cancer.

The Lebed Method is now in 12 countries and has 800 instructors.

"It's a pretty remarkable feeling that something that or my mom 28 years ago is now worldwide, helping thousands of women have a better quality of life," Sherry said.

"You get e-mails from women thanking you about how much their lives have changed so you can't ever stop," she said.

In Hamden, Ashley and one of her professors, breast cancer survivor Maureen Helgren, are the pioneers. They have a class anyone is invited to at 5:15 p.m. Mondays at the Schweitzer Institute on the Quinnipiac campus in Hamden. To reach Helgren, call (203) 582-5243. More information on the Lebed Method is available at www.lebedmethod.com.

Here are a few more fund-raisers in this, Breast Cancer Awareness Month:

%The inaugural Think Pink fashion show to raise money for the American Cancer Society begins at 7 p.m. Friday in Body Works Studio, 317 Foxon Road, East Haven. Tickets are \$30. Call (203) 469-7500.

- Seven-year breast cancer survivor Jean Richo and Pete Morris are raising money for the Breast Cancer Network of Strength, from 6 p.m. until whenever, Friday at the West Haven Elks Lodge, Main Street. There will be a DJ, a buffet, raffles and a cash bar. Call (203) 483-7959 or (203) 988-3251.

- Amy and Tom Carney of Hamden will hold a coat sale from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, rain or shine, at 140 Briarcliff Road, in honor of the late Pat Carney. Coats for a Cure is o many ways the Cameys continue to raise money for the Pat's Pride Relay for Life team. Every coat is \$5, to help lower-income families stay warm this winter. Thanks to Billy Veneris of Rainbow Cleaners for cleaning the coats.

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