

Just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you are a friend/member of the Metropolitan Chattanooga YMCA . This is NOT SPAM. If we didn't land in your inbox, please add info@ymcachattanooga.org to your address book. We want you to meet some of the people who have stories to tell!

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.

Greetings!  
Storytellers from our LiveStrong classes!

Janet Dunn, CEO

P.S. THANK YOU Gloria, for a great video clip!



July 2016



**Mike McKenna**

### ***Why the LiveStrong class?***

"My wife told me I had to do it," Mike McKenna admits with a smile. "She dragged me down here and I thank her for it. The friendships made in the class and the emotional and spiritual support was fulfilling for me."

"Once I was getting over the chemo treatments my doctor recommended the class because she had seen good results," says Patsi Walker, a colon cancer survivor. "I figured I'd start back exercising on my own, but then decided it would be good for someone to make me accountable for a healthy comeback. Oh my goodness it was wonderful!"



**Patsi Walker**



**Gloria Thrasher**

Gloria Thrasher says, "I couldn't believe there was a program for people dealing with cancer. Some of them were done with their cancer treatments --like me -- and some would be in the middle of their chemo. My friend insisted I would be a good person to encourage the ones who are right in it."

"Why? Curiosity! I wondered if it would truly help, and it absolutely did," says Paula Smith, a two time warrior against breast cancer. "The support and friendships were amazing. We are still in touch with each other.

Beyond the cancer, the spiritual aspect was something else that bound us together."



**Paula Smith**

### ***Can you describe the class?***

"First there is a pre-class assessment of your ability and then again at the end (12 weeks) to show you the progress," Paula says.

"I felt all along that I was getting better, but WOW, I didn't know it had increased

that much!"

"Yoga, cardio machines, water aerobics, weight machines, Tai chi, Zumba, spin class, exercise balls and Pilates," Mike says. "I meditate while I'm walking the treadmill. I go through the rosary in my mind and say prayers for everyone. The leader of the class, Michelle, was very spiritual, but also had a sense of humor. We prayed together after each class and celebrated milestones like when someone had their last chemo or radiation treatment."

"Everyone in the group felt loved and appreciated. This is Michelle's calling, to weave us together with a peaceful aura. We were not there to be defined by our disease," Patsi says. "She started from where we were and helped us get to the next level of strength by adapting the activities so we could do more. Maybe one person needed a ball at their back or some other way to do that exercise."

### ***What about the cancer?***

"This was my second time with breast cancer. It happened on the doctor's visit of my five-year check up when I was feeling so good, off all the meds, having my first routine mammogram and expecting a clean slate," Paula remembers. "And they found a small spot. Boy it really knocked me down! September to April was chemo then radiation then surgery. By August, I was in the LiveStrong class."

"An endoscope revealed mine. The doctor said 'I've got bad news. You have cancer'," says Mike who battled back from esophageal cancer. "When I had surgery it knocked me down to a crawl. I couldn't get out of a chair."

"It had been a little over a year since my last colonoscopy. The doctor came in and said 'I hate to tell you, you have cancer.' The treatment included two surgeries and chemotherapy," Patsi says. "I felt nauseous, had zero energy and never felt that bad in my entire life. Quite frankly, I didn't want to talk about it. But I discovered in class that it's sometimes helpful to talk about it."

"Those poor folks who came to the class even when they had chemo that day and they still came, weak, no hair, and loved that class!" Gloria remembers. "Now I see that exercise helped them eat better, sleep better, relieve some of the stress, get over the aches and pains, and even the stuff going on in your head."

### ***What struck you about the others in your group?***

"You realized the old 'woe is me' means there is always someone who has more woe than me," Mike says. "You are not in the boat alone. Yes, it's a personal journey, but it is easier with someone else."

"I was surprised to find some folks who had been cancer-free for five years, some going through chemo right then, a few who were terminal, but everyone had something to give," Patsi recalls. "One man in the class had a brain tumor and his wife was researching grants to help with medical costs. It was good information that they shared with everyone."

"I had some real sensitivity in my feet that was probably a side effect from the

chemo," Paula says. "Someone from the class understood what I was talking about and recommended shoe inserts. It was a great tip."

Gloria says "There were about ten of us from all different backgrounds. When someone would say 'I only have 3 more chemo treatments' we understood what that meant. We were very open and honest with each other. Even the men said they liked the straight talk. I was shocked!"

***What about the Y connection? Watch Gloria's [VIDEO!](#)***

"The Y trainers really keep you going. When you are having chemo and radiation your energy is so low," says Paula. "They know how much to push you without pushing you too far. And we shared eating tips and recipes because it's important for blood counts to eat the right foods."

"While we were in the 12-week program our spouses could come to the Y and use the facility. For many of them, their spouse had to drive them there so they might as well stay and exercise," Patsi says. "For the YMCA - it's a natural fit. I'm not surprised they would embrace this."

"You know when you get cancer, everybody thinks you are fixing to die and starts backing off. I thought it was a great idea that the YMCA would try to get closer to the people who were sick and struggling," Gloria says. "I am just so impressed that the YMCA has such caring people. You really don't find that too many places."

**LiveStrong is a research-based physical and well-being program to help adult cancer survivors reclaim their health. Available at North River, Downtown, Cleveland and Hamilton Family YMCA.**

**YMCA (423) 265-8834**

**LiveStrong (423) 805-3356**

**[www.ymcachattanooga.org](http://www.ymcachattanooga.org)**

**LiveStrong**