

COURAGE, LIFE & HOPE

# REFLECTIONS *of a journey*



**ASPIRUS™**  
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CANCER CENTER

Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.



## Lori Pingel

Lori Pingel faced her breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and recovery with the same honesty and openness that characterizes her life. The result has been nearly two disease-free years.

And although she tolerated surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy as well as she could have hoped, the experience hasn't been easy. Her two sons, Evan, now 9, and Justin, 5, had to watch their mom endure a mastectomy, as well as the nausea, hair loss and fatigue that often accompanies follow-up treatments. Through it all, she was honest with them about her condition and what it involved, and she believes her family is now better off because of that openness.

"My youngest son didn't really understand, but my older one, he knew there was something wrong," Lori said. "I told them it's okay to be scared."

Throughout treatment, Lori continued to be frank with her family. When she came home from work at night, she always took off her wig. She showed her children the surgical wound on the right side of her chest. And she refused to make any promises that she wasn't sure she would be able to keep.

"I think we all dealt with the uncertainty very well," she said. "And I really think much of that is because we kept a positive attitude. I think it started right away when I found out. I really put my head up and said, 'I'm gonna fight this.'"

Thankfully, there have been a lot of supporters in her corner for the fight.

From her family and friends to her employer and the administration at Evan's school, the people in Lori's life rallied around her and provided her with the support she needed. It came in the form of flexibility and understanding, direct physical care, and scores of home-cooked meals. Her husband, Gary, who picked up the slack at home, was buoyed by all the assistance as well.

"Sometimes I'd be finishing up dinner, and there'd be a knock at the door," Gary said. "What do you know, another hot meal. So one would go into the fridge."

After her surgery, Lori's positive attitude and hardiness allowed her to work through two rounds of chemotherapy, as well as radiation therapy. And despite discomfort and fatigue, she always tried to lift the spirits of other patients at the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center. She would chat with and

encourage people as they received chemotherapy, and her positive attitude resulted in several strong friendships.

Lori said her family relationships have been strengthened by her experiences, too. Her brother and two sisters, all older, rallied around her throughout the process. In November, Lori traveled to Arizona to participate in the Breast Cancer Walk with one of her sisters. It was an uplifting event.

"My family has really become close as a result of the cancer," Lori said. "We were close, but we became much closer."

