

[← Back](#)

# Pink Ribbon connecting patients to normalcy

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*By Maggie Miles*   *October 2, 2020*   *Publication: Virginian-Pilot, The (Norfolk, VA)*   *Page: 28E*   *Word Count: 988*

When Kim Twine's mother Joyce was diagnosed with breast cancer 30 years ago, the pair went to get Joyce measured for a prosthesis and fitted for bras at a medical supply store following her mastectomy. The store offered a variety of things for all kinds of patients but had no fitting room to speak of. Instead, Joyce was escorted to a tiny closet.

"I felt like I was going to smother in there, it was so tight," says Joyce Twine, 85. "It wasn't a welcoming place at all."

So, mother and daughter explored other options: Pharmacies in strip malls with no privacy; orthotics offices where hammering and sawing was heard during a fitting; online shops where sizing was always a guess; and hospitals with boutiques that double as training sites and have high employee turnover rates.

In most cases, the breast prostheses and apparel felt like an afterthought, Joyce Twine says.

"After a woman has had (cancer) and she's had a mastectomy and she's had the doctors' visits and all of the follow ups, they've had enough of doctors and hospitals," says Kim Twine, 59. "And before their surgery, you didn't go to a hospital to buy a bra, so ... why then, for the rest of your life, should you have to go back to the hospital? No, they want a sense of normalcy."

In January, Twine opened the Pink Ribbon Resource Center, a specialty shop in Moyock that is dedicated solely to the needs of breast cancer patients from the time of their diagnosis and beyond by offering education, products, support and more.

Pink Ribbon is a post mastectomy durable medical equipment provider serving northeast North Carolina and southeast Hampton Roads, Virginia, and Twine is a certified mastectomy fitter. According to her, a proper fit is really important because overtime a woman with no breasts can often end up with drooped or rolled shoulders due to a lack of chest support.

"When there's no tissue there, your shoulder wants to naturally, by gravity, go towards your center line," she says. "Especially if you have a woman who's had a double mastectomy, she's in her 30s, over the years, her body is going to want to do that really quickly, so having the weight on the chest wall and proper support with the bra, it helps us hold ourselves up," says Twine.

"There's a lot involved to it," she adds. "It's not just having boobies and looking pretty."

Twine notes that reconstructive surgery isn't an option for everyone. Some women's body's reject implants or develop infections; sometimes they just can't physically do it.

Twine, who previously worked in television news, first volunteered at a boutique in Florida after

her mother's diagnosis. Years later she left the newsroom to open her own boutique in Maryland, after her mother realized there was nowhere in that area for her to get a prosthesis or bra. It was a for-profit women's clothing boutique with a small mastectomy shop in the back.

Twine's goal for the Pink Ribbon Resource Center is to make it a one-stop shop, solely for breast cancer patients and survivors. Not only does she have breast prostheses and post-mastectomy bras, but she also provides compression garments with all sorts of beautiful patterns to help with lymphedema. There are natural skin products made by cancer survivors for the dry skin and burns caused by radiation and chemotherapy, as well as head wraps and wigs that Twine will match as closely to your real hair as possible. She even has prosthesis accommodating swimwear.

Twine says she made the center a nonprofit because prostheses can be pricey - up to around \$350 per breast form or \$700 for a set - and the area the shop serves has a lot of underinsured, lower-income clients. She is also opening a boutique next door called Nola's this week, from which sales will go to helping women in need get the prostheses they need. (Nola stands for New and Once Loved Apparel.)

Deemed an essential business, the center has been able to stay open throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Jan Wilson, a Southern Shores resident and 20-year breast cancer survivor who now oversees the Christian Breast Cancer Support Group, which coincidentally Twine's mother founded three decades ago, discovered the Pink Ribbon Resource Center at the beginning of quarantine.

"It's almost like a godsend that she's there," says Wilson, 73. "We don't have to go to the city and sit in a medical waiting room. It's so nice to go to this ladies' shop."

According to Wilson, Twine makes the fitting process comfortable and easy.

"Sometimes when you take your shirt off or take your bra off you are worried they're going to be scared of what they see, because of scars or deformities, and she is not fazed by that," says Wilson. "I just can't say enough about how excited I am, and I just wish her all the success and I hope she stays in that shop forever because we just need her, we really need her."

Twine says the most rewarding part about her job is supporting her clients through the various stages of a breast cancer diagnosis, from early on when they think their world is falling apart to when they feel they can move on with life. Providing a sense of normalcy is her goal, as well as reminding her clients that they're going to be OK.

"You really do develop good friendships," Twine says.

Pink Ribbon Resource Center

Where: 119 Baxter Lane, Moyock

Contact: 252-435-2776, [pinkribbonresourcecenter@gmail.com](mailto:pinkribbonresourcecenter@gmail.com); [@pinkribbonresourcecenter](#) on Facebook

For more information about the Christian Breast Cancer Support Group, call Jan Wilson at 252-441-5232 or look for the group on Facebook. The group has held monthly virtual meetings since the pandemic hit, Wilson says you need not be Christian to join.

Kim Twine opened the nonprofit Pink Ribbon Resource Center in Moyock in January. The shop is dedicated to the needs of breast cancer patients from the time of their diagnosis and beyond by offering education, products, support and more. The Pink Ribbon Resource Center opened in January and Nola's opens this week. Maggie Miles/Freelance Photo courtesy of Kim Twine

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**Page:** 28E

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