

NothingPink: Knowledge and Support for Hereditary Cancers

It was 2013, and when Kelly Kashmer left her yearly checkup with her gynecologist, she was more concerned about getting the toddler down for a nap than she was about the blood test she had just taken. A week later, though, everything changed. Kelly learned she had the BRCA gene mutation, which increases her chance for breast and ovarian cancer by up to 85 percent. Then, after a baseline mammogram, she learned the devastating news that she already had breast cancer.

It was October, and as Kelly underwent a double mastectomy and began aggressive chemotherapy, she was surrounded by pink ribbons and bows everywhere she went. Though she understood the need for research and support, Kelly couldn't shake this feeling growing inside her: there's nothing pink about breast cancer.

As the mom of two beautiful daughters, Kelly associated pink with their dresses and bows, with artwork hanging on the refrigerator, with princesses and fairytales. Now, she was in the kind of pink world no one wanted to live in. Kelly knew then that when she was feeling well enough, she'd turn her tragedy into a way to help other women.

The mission of NothingPink is to increase awareness of hereditary breast and ovarian cancers and provide personalized support for individuals at high risk. Initially, Kelly and her team of volunteers participated in outreach opportunities across the region, encouraging both women and men to learn about their risk for hereditary cancers. (Did you know that men also carry the BRCA gene mutation?) In doing this outreach, Kelly began meeting so many women in our community that were going through the same things she was, and she knew they could all benefit from connection.

Now, NothingPink offers monthly support meetings for women in all stages of their BRCA journeys. Some women are survivors of hereditary breast or ovarian cancer, while others have decided to have preventative surgery to reduce their risk. Many women may have just learned of their gene mutation and are wondering what their options are. Together, they find hope and support in a loving, welcoming environment.

NothingPink also provides assistance to women undergoing surgery or treatment for breast or ovarian cancer. Whether it's a care package full of all the things necessary to heal after surgery or a gift card to help the family buy groceries during recovery, Kelly and NothingPink want women in the Charlotte area to know that they are not alone.

All of this is made possible through the generous donations from the community and through their annual fundraiser, An Evening with NothingPink. This year's event will be held on September 17th, in McBryde Hall on the Winthrop University campus. The night includes dinner, dancing, and both live and silent auctions.

To learn more about NothingPink, take a quiz on hereditary cancer risk, or get information about an Evening with NothingPink, visit their website at www.NothingPink.org. Tickets for the event can be purchased by visiting Npink.givesmart.com.