

## UWS Mom Connects Breast Cancer Patients With 'Freebies' to Help Healing



By Emily Frost on October 8, 2014

UPPER WEST SIDE — Many people don't realize that beyond all the havoc breast cancer wreaks on the body, dealing with and recovering from the disease is also very expensive, survivor Bethany Kandel.

From the obvious costs, like co-pays and prescription medication, to the lesser-known expenses, like wigs and scarves, fighting breast cancer can come as a huge financial blow, said the longtime Upper West Sider, journalist and mother.

To make resources more accessible, Kandel, 57, created and launched the website Breast Cancer Freebies two years ago as a way of marking her five-year anniversary as a cancer-free survivor.

Her site aims to consolidate all the offerings from companies and individuals that try to help breast cancer patients and survivors including access to free wigs, hats, books, smartphone apps, cancer screenings, cosmetic tattoos, treatment travel costs and more.

"I'm a connector. I will always tell my friends about things," explained Kandel, a West 83rd Street resident who said that helping others find information has always been part of her nature. Now I'm helping a bigger audience."

When Kandel was undergoing chemotherapy, she was given a free bag of supplies from the organization CancerCare to help her through the treatment. It contained items like ginger tea to help with her nausea and special toothpaste to help treat her dry mouth, another side effect she experienced after chemo.

The American Cancer Society also gave her a wig for free — saving her up to \$1,000 — and taught her how to style it.

Kandel realized she wanted to make it as easy as possible to access these helpful supplies and resources, and help people tap into the wide network of care and support options.



While there are free and low-cost resources to help people cope, information about these freebies is often scattered, she said, and the search for help can be exhausting.

After her treatment concluded, Kandel often found herself thinking: "I wish I knew about that." She heard the same complaint from others who were battling breast cancer. They'd come across resources at the end of a news story or share tips via word of mouth, but it was hard to keep track of everything, especially while they were sick, she said.

Breast Cancer Freebies has since become a one-stop shop for anyone battling the disease, said Terri Dupuy, who teaches a free aquatic fitness class for women with breast cancer at the JCC in Manhattan.

Financial woes are a genuine concern for the women with breast cancer in Dupuy's class, she said.

"Some of them lose their jobs, sometimes their marriage doesn't work out," she explained. "Not everyone has a supportive partner."

Kandel's site is one of the first things Dupuy tells her students to check out. Dupuy trusts that it's up to date because Kandel, who was once one of her students, is invested in maintaining it, the instructor said.

"She's doing a lot of the homework," she said. "A lot of websites come and go, and Bethany is on top of that."

About a dozen emails arrive each week in Kandel's inbox from people asking for help — whether it's a man with breast cancer needing a specialized support group, or a woman looking for a beanie to wear at night to keep her head warm.

She writes to all of them and keeps the site updated with a constant flow of opportunities in her free time.

"I'm bowled over by what's out there and how much help and support is out there," she said.

Receiving free makeup to help you look better when you're not feeling great is helpful financially, but the message of support it sends "is almost more important than that it's free," Kandel noted.

The site is growing each year as more people find it and she promotes it on social media platforms, she added.

During October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, she's sharing a free resource every day via her Twitter @CancerFreebies.

URL: <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20141008/upper-west-side/uws-mom-connects-breast-cancer-patients-with-freebies-help-healing>