



Ester Pretorius: Global Hero of Hope - 2013

I was diagnosed with cancer of the larynx (vocal chords) at the age of 43. My oncologist's prognosis was not positive – he indicated that if the radiation therapy was not successful, I would have to receive chemotherapy or have my vocal chords removed. The possibility existed that he might not be able to treat me successfully and that the cancer would be left to spread – I was literally staring death in the face! I was determined not to have my vocal chords removed, as I wanted to laugh and chat to my grandchildren. I found it hard to accept my diagnosis - I had never smoked, although my mother had been a chain smoker.

Fortunately the radiation therapy proved successful and after 2 years my oncologist announced that the cancer was gone. I would not have managed to cope with my diagnosis and treatment if it had not been for my faith in God and the support of my family and friends. After recovering, I felt that I wanted to give back and encourage others in my community.

I started as a patient care volunteer at the CANSA Care Centre in Western Gauteng in 2004. I was trained in home based care and started to look after cancer patients in my community. I saw the need to become involved in fundraising activities in order to raise funds to sustain CANSA's work and am currently managing over 19 fundraising projects. I am also helping to run a daycare support group and a feeding scheme which is providing food to 54 families.

My first Relay For Life (RFL) event was the West Rand RFL Event in 2009. From the 1st moment I knew that I wanted to be the Survivor Chair, so that I could be involved in recruiting and encouraging cancer survivors. For the past 4 years I have been the Survivor Chair and my role is to make all participating survivors feel loved and spoiled at the event. I also refer them to the CANSA Care Centre if they need support, so that they can benefit from CANSA's service offering to cancer survivors.

RFL is such an important platform to share a message of HOPE with cancer survivors. Especially those who have been newly diagnosed – they are encouraged when they meet other cancer survivors and see that cancer can be beaten. RFL also affords loved ones time to remember those dear to them that have lost the fight. This is unique to RFL – no other event in SA allows for this. It is also a fantastic vehicle to promote information about reducing cancer risk.

I have been in remission for 20 years now. My cancer diagnosis helped me to appreciate life more. I do not take one day for granted and am determined to make healthy lifestyle choices. This is why I am passionate about educating others by doing health talks and exhibitions. My wish is that my story will be a source of hope to all cancer patients in my community and that they would never give up, no matter what their circumstances might be.

One World - One Hope!

CELEBRATE

REMEMBER

FIGHT BACK