

Through Thick & Thin

By Nancy Fawson



scattered everywhere and the kids eating junk food for weeks on end caused me almost as much anxiety as the disease itself.

And what about my husband? How would he care for all of us while trying to juggle the pressures of work? After all, we had only moved here from New York a year ago and most of our family and closest friends were thousands of miles away. How would we handle this on our own?

Thankfully, we didn't have to. As family, friends from afar, and many new friends from Marin learned of my diagnosis, they flooded us with support. They called, sent cards and booked airplane tickets to leave their own families to help take care of mine. While I was in the hospital, they lovingly cared for my children, washed and folded mountains of laundry and prepared meals for my picky little eaters without complaint. While I was home recovering, they helped me get in and out of bed, empty my surgical drains and dress my wounds. They offered endless encouragement, patience and much needed humor. Eventually, a sense of normalcy replaced the uncertainty and chaos that had settled over our house.

Though I have always known that my family loved me, there is nothing like having a scary disease to really bring home the depth of that love. Their willingness to help with even the most disagreeable tasks was truly humbling. After all, most anyone is happy to play with a cheerful, clean baby, but only a special few are just as happy to change her diaper and get up with her when she is fussing in the middle of the night. It is this unconditional, selfless love that underlies what family is all about. I couldn't have made it through without them. As the holidays approach and the end of the year draws near, I look forward to celebrating with gratitude, joy and family.



Nancy Fawson is a former corporate attorney who moved to Marin from NYC where she lived for over two decades. She lives in Belvedere with her husband and two children and chronicles her discoveries as well as her insights into what it's like to be a New Yorker in Marin on her blog, "www.nycgirlbythebay.com".

My doctor called on a Saturday afternoon in June, just as we were preparing to leave for my son's t-ball game, to give me the news, "I want you to know that you will recover from this," she stressed. "You are lucky. We caught it early but you will need to have surgery. Soon."

I silently nodded and scrawled incomprehensible notes on a scrap of paper. I tried to remain calm over the next few days as I focused on learning as much as possible about my diagnosis and my treatment options. But the more I learned, the more panicked I became. Three weeks, seven surgeon visits (I like to be prepared), two mammograms, four biopsies, one MRI, and countless sleepless nights later I scheduled a bi-lateral mastectomy and DIEP flap reconstruction for the following month.

I was relieved to have set a date for the surgery, but now that I was no longer focused on research and planning, my idle mind sank into worry, fear and dread.

The thought of the impending surgery would literally shake me out of sleep and leave me completely terrified. My recovery time could range from weeks to months, and beyond that, nobody knew for certain what treatments I would need. Who would care for my children? The house? The idea of the laundry piling up, dirty dishes