



Life Beyond Cancer

At age 40, after her first mammogram, Ann Monsigleo was diagnosed with breast cancer. Now nearly eight years later, Ann's working full-time, has raised close to \$20,000 for cancer research, has biked 192 miles in a two-day annual fundraiser, and appreciates a good laugh.



"The way the whole program is set up at ECHN, you feel like you are in a cocoon when you're going through it because they take care of everything."

"You think you're going to die," Ann says when asked how she first felt about the 2005 stage-one breast cancer diagnosis she received. After surgery, Ann went through chemotherapy and radiation treatment from September 2005 through February 2006 at ECHN's John A. DeQuattro Community Cancer Center.

"Dr. Raynor [Ann's surgeon, Winfield Raynor, M.D.] saved my life. The infusion nurses at the Cancer Center were incredibly compassionate. The way they listen to you, the way they look at you, the way they work with you—it was done with such great compassion. The ECHN cancer treatment program I was on worked perfectly. And I had the support of my mother, friends, and everyone at Knight Hall School where I work." All those things helped. So did Ann's own attitude and actions. After her treatment ended, Ann returned to work part-time as a teacher. She joined a gym and hired a personal trainer. And she decided to give back.

The treatment drugs and Ann's inability to be active had caused her to gain 80 pounds. It took about five years to lose the first 40 pounds, but she lost the last 40 in just a year with 90-minute workouts four times a

week. Diet helped, too. Ann cut out junk food and went on what she calls her KYMS diet: Keep Your Mouth Shut.

For each of the last six years, Ann's given back by completing a 192-mile two-day bike ride for cancer, the Pan-Mass Challenge. The first year she participated she raised \$3,200; this year the total was \$4,300, all with the help of Knight Hall School.

Going back to work and being with the children also helped Ann. The school director gave Ann the flexibility to work when she could, and the children eagerly accepted her back. She wore bandannas to school to keep her head covered, but the children loved her baldness. So Ann would tell them, "You have to clean up this room before you can see the bald head."

Ann was particularly impressed by two people from ECHN who helped her. Ann loved nurse practitioner Kathy Lombardi's lust for life, her ability to encourage, and her high quality of care; and Dr. Raynor, who gave Ann the straight truth, put his patient's needs first, and made her laugh. "Laughing is important," Ann says. "There are enough tears in life. You have to enjoy the laughter."

"The way the whole program is set up at ECHN, you feel like you are in a cocoon when you're going through it because they take care of everything. I'm thankful everyone at ECHN was there for me."