

## JOURNEY WITH PURPOSE

*“Cancer is a word; not a sentence.”*

- John Diamond

**M**y husband, Gary, was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2004 at a relatively young age. No worries. Removing a cancerous prostate cures the disease. On the morning of surgery, I sat in the hospital waiting area, armed with a book, distracted, watching other families receive good news from the doctors dressed in blue with face masks dangling from around their necks.

And then there was Gary’s blue-clad, mask-dangling surgeon. He sat down across from me and calmly explained that preliminary tests indicated the cancer had already spread to Gary’s lymph nodes.

I sat alone, trying to process this information. We were so sure this uninvited guest would not be staying long. I forced myself to my feet, found the row of telephones and dialed a number. When I heard our daughter’s voice, I fell apart.

### **Recruiting a team**

Gary and I began reading as much as we could about prostate cancer (why do they use such words as *metastasized* when *spread* is easier to spell?). Radiation wasn’t an option in Gary’s case, and there is no proven chemotherapy effective on slow-growing prostate cancer cells.

Hormone therapy was prescribed. It doesn’t cure; it just buys time. We were told that eventually the cancer cells build immunity to hormone therapy, but meanwhile the patient has lived longer.

Not your best case scenario, but I’ll take it.

We decided early on that we wanted to be proactive in facing down cancer. Our thought was that cancer patients shouldn’t sit back and hope the medical treatments are all they’ll need.

We came up with the concept of recruiting a cancer team that would help us live well despite cancer. Gary is the coach and I signed on as assistant coach. We have a full roster – our team consists of ...