

BRIDGING THE GAP

“The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.”

- Herbert Spencer

Within 24 hours of her breast cancer diagnosis, Lizzi Katz received two phone calls – one from the local Breast Cancer Case Manager and the other from a patient Navigator.

“I felt well guided,” says Lizzi. “No matter what, I always had someone to talk to.”

These services and others are funded by the Sara Fisher Breast Cancer Project of the St. Charles Foundation in Bend, Oregon. Sara’s Project was established in memory of a much-loved high school teacher and counselor in this Central Oregon community.

After a full recovery, Lizzi was hoping to find a way to give back. And then an opportunity presented itself – would she be interested in teaching breast health education classes to women in Central and Eastern Oregon, including those of the native tribes, Hispanic populations and frontier areas.

It was the perfect fit for Lizzi.

Manhattan girl

Lizzi was born and raised in New York City, the middle child sandwiched between two brothers. Her younger brother now lives in the same spacious apartment where she grew up. Lizzi says that New York was dirty and loud but the trade-off was exposure from a young age to a diversity of cultures, museums, dance, theatre and music.

During a break from college, Lizzi took a trip out west and fell in love with the mountains and waterways and tall evergreens. “I’ve always loved the outdoors,” says Lizzi, “—camping, snowboarding, hiking, cross-country skiing, swimming, ice-skating.” She lived in Olympia, Washington, for a while and then attended art school in Oakland, California.

Lizzi was 23 when she got the news that her mother was dying of cervical cancer. She and her two brothers moved back home to care for their mother during her last few months. It was a very difficult time for Lizzi, but the silver lining was that she and her brothers lived together under the same roof and became reacquainted as adults.