

Leonie Harry

Breast cancer Survivor



East London, SA

“CANSAs Relay For Life is my platform for celebration of life and sharing Hope”

Leonie Harry was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 38 years in 2002. She was absolutely devastated by the diagnosis, and her world, as she knew it, came crashing down.

She had to have her left breast amputated, and she very quickly descended into a dark pit of depression and anger caused by her loss: the loss of her breast, her “femininity”, her identity and some of her friends. She became introverted and very unsociable, and the onset of chemotherapy only added fuel to her fire of loss and anger. She lost weight, lost her hair, lost her appetite, lost her energy, lost her faith and lost Hope.

To make matters worse, she was advised, nine months after her diagnosis, to have a total hysterectomy, because her cancer was estrogen-receptive. However, slowly, with the love and care of her colleagues, a few friends, the staff of the Oncology Unit, and the love, care and support of the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs) East London staff, Leonie started reclaiming her life. She also began to realize the importance of meeting other cancer Survivors and belonging to a support group. Her real turning point was the Sunday she chose to remove her scarf, and attend her church serviceBALD. It would seem that going bald in public helped to change her attitude to BOLD!

After attending the “Shoulder Clinic” at CANSAs East London and sitting and “chatting” to the CANSAs staff for many months, Leonie started developing a passion to help other cancer Survivors to cope with their diagnoses and consequent side effects, and she learnt to laugh again.

She has found a platform for a celebration of life and a place to share the Hope she now has.