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Pink-Link: powerful support, database for breast cancer survivors

March 20, 2:37 PM LA Successful Women Entrepreneurs Examiner Susan Pascal



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Vicki Tashman, founder of Pink-link.org Vicki Tashman

Vicki Tashman had just made the decision to make some changes in her life. It was February of 2004 and the 45-year-old, Los Angeles stay-at-home mother of two had left a part-time job and was ready to move forward when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. "So I had this new job of taking care of myself," she recalls. "Though I didn't know it at the time, it was like the Universe had sent me a message to be doing something special with my life."

Fortunately, her cancer was caught very early. She had a lumpectomy, both chemo and radiation, and was finished with her treatment by the end of the year. "I remember when it was all over, I was feeling so grateful for all the support I had received from friends and family and especially for the fact that I lived in a large city that offered top medical care. I was ready to give back and wanted to do volunteer work or something," she says.

"One day I was having lunch with a girlfriend, also a breast cancer survivor who'd had a double mastectomy, and she was getting ready for reconstructive surgery. She lamented that she didn't have anyone to talk to about the different kinds of

surgeries available. I stated that there should be some kind of website where survivors could connect."

With that idea in mind, Tashman went on to establish Pink-Link.org, a free, non-profit, website where breast cancer survivors can meet virtually from all over the world. Currently, there are over 3800 members. "I keep it as membership only for privacy and confidentiality," Tashman says. "You sign up with a username and password. Next you fill out a breast cancer profile that includes such questions as the surgeries you've had, the stage at which you were diagnosed, treatments, and that

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questions as the urgency you've had, the stage at which you were diagnosed, treatments, and what goes into a comprehensive database. From there you will have access to the 'members only' database to find a mentor."

Tashman explains that members can specify the type of mentor they want by utilizing searches like age, ethnicity or zip code. Upon selecting a mentor, the new member will send an intra-site email with a message and await a response. "Our members have the right to refuse a request, depending on what they may be going through at the time," Tashman states. If accepted, the members can then connect either through Pink-Link or exchange personal email addresses.

Pink-Link also offers a Blog section where members can write and read about survivors' journeys. Tashman observes, "This can be a very therapeutic experience."

There are also two types of Forums. The first is for members to post questions to one another. The second is geared for questions to the medical community. Tashman has enlisted the help of a nutritionist, wholistic health professional, skin care expert, physical trainer and a lymphodema expert

"I established Pink-Link to empower women to be their own best advocates. We have to stay informed and, most importantly, not to be afraid to ask questions!" Tashman has plans to expand the site with more features. To become involved or to make donations, go to www.pink-Link.org.

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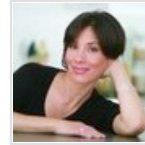
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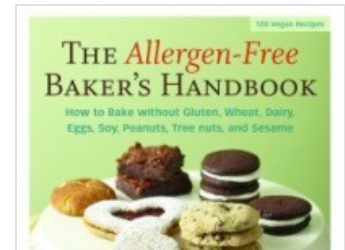
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