

Meet Pam Watt - Cancer Survivor, Walker, Volunteer, and Patient Advocate

By Ellen Swercewski

If you haven't met Pam Watt yet, I hope you get to meet her in the near future.

Pam is a resident of Waterford and employed by the Mohegan Tribe as the Clerk of the Court/Administrator.



Pictured are Pam's Pink Posse walkers Judy Teel, Pam Watt and Tara Maltese at the Walk finish line.

Pam was diagnosed in June 2008 with two types of breast cancer (DCIS and IDC). "At that time, my friends and family formed a team called Pam's Pink Posse and walked in the Terri Brodeur Breast Cancer Foundation (TBBCF) Walk Across SECT in support of my fight. While I was waiting for my team at the finish line, I had the pleasure of meeting Sandy and Phil Maniscalco and Marcie and Howard Brensilver. The love, care and support that they extended to me on that day, along with the fact that 100% of all funds raised are directed toward cancer research is what brought me back to TBBCF. I joined the Pink Posse in 2009 and have walked the full marathon for the past five years. I became a year-round volunteer in 2010 and hold the position of Matching Gift Administrator and fill in as needed."

Pam was asked by Mary Ann Nash, Program Coordinator, Nutrition and also Clinical & Operations Improvement Specialist at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital to be involved as one of the Patient Advocates during the design stage of the Lawrence & Memorial Cancer Center, recently opened on October 1, 2013. The Patient Advocate brings the patients' perspective to the design of the building to ensure the best treatment facility possible in our area.

I asked Mary Ann Nash, what she was looking for in a patient advocate. "We wanted cancer patients



who had been treated outside the community to work with us. Why did they go outside the community? What was their experience, both negative and positive, where they were treated? What was special about where they were treated? We wanted to bring their experience into the design process. Pam had great insight into her care and was able to clearly articulate what she felt cancer patients would want and able to explain why. It was a win/win for all of us. Along with others, Pam provided input regarding the infusion chairs for patients getting chemotherapy, testing chairs. The chair they finally determined was a La-Z boy recliner with built-in heat and massage. Very important to the patients are private bays for chemo infusion along with a common area where they can gather with family or other patients if they choose.”

Mary Ann said that L&M wanted this cancer center to be a best-in-class facility for cancer patients. We have three academic institutions identified with L&M: Dana Farber, a new affiliation, Yale (radiation & chemo) and Brown (GYN oncology), both with L&M for 15 years.

When asked what her experience was as Patient Advocate, Pam’s response was, “I was honored to be chosen to participate in the design and advertising of the building. It truly was an amazing experience to have worked side by side with the architects, doctors, nurses and so many others in designing the facility. I am blessed to have beaten the disease and was happy to have the chance to give back in the hope of easing the journey for someone else. My participation in the project is limited at this time. I was active in marketing by way of a photo shoot and filming a commercial.”

Pam’s final thoughts: “They say that one in every eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Upon diagnosis, many women will wonder, “why me?” Although cancer has forever changed my life, I am at that point where I am comfortable with the fact that it was me. I have met some great people, have counseled many women through their treatment, and am very proud to be part of this great organization, TBBCF, and to assist the amazing people that keep it going.”