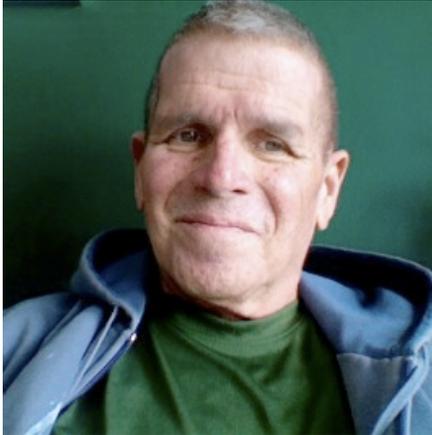


| In His Own Words, *by Richard Barton*



I was diagnosed with colorectal cancer almost three years ago. I guess I will never forget the look on the doctor's face after my colonoscopy; it was clear he meant business. Long story short, I had and have cancer, and I instantly joined the special group of people who, one way or another, are dealing with the disease.

Membership in that special group comes with a variety of responses. Suddenly I was supposed to be the resident expert on cancer, or the "go-to" guy to find out about the treatment a friend was receiving, or maybe the subject of the "how is he doing" whispers. At times being special has its advantages but believe me, there are drawbacks.

I was "special" everywhere I went, everywhere that is, except Gilda's Club. It was a suggestion of the oncology nurse at my chemo education that we check out Gilda's. We did not know what to expect, but once through the big red doors I was just Richard. Not Richard, the guy with cancer, just Richard. Everybody at Gilda's Club is dealing with the same disease, so having cancer is in no way unique for the members.

Cancer is a strange, very personal disease that I would not wish on anyone, but can be best understood by people who share the condition. Gilda's Club offered me the opportunity to be myself, even if myself now included having cancer. My treatments were such that I was off of work for an entire year, and Gilda's Club provided me with opportunities to take a more holistic approach to what my body was experiencing. Qigong and yoga classes became an important part of my routine and my treatment.

Some say it takes an entire village to cure cancer. For me, Gilda's has become part of my village, as well as a vital part of my support system as I continue treatment. I choose to look at my cancer as an opportunity to squeeze every drop of life out of every minute that I am given.

It was at a Gilda's workshop that the presenter pointed out that one way to look at cancer is to focus on the obvious negative impacts it has on your life. There is, however, another way to look at it. Focus on what cancer has given you. Perhaps it is a new perspective, maybe a more meaningful relationship, or a deeper understanding of just who you are. Looking at it that way encourages one to think of it in terms of 'Yes, I CAN SIR' consider the opportunities.

That is my choice. In many ways my life has never been richer. To quote an old friend, who just happens to also have colorectal cancer, "It ain't all bad." I am grateful that here in the Capital Region of New York there is a Gilda's Club. I hope that one day soon the Twin Cities will be able to offer the same to my sister, Nancy, and all the others who call the Twin Cities home. My thoughts, hopes and energy are with you.