

Peggy's Story



Receiving a cancer diagnosis brings many new responsibilities, feelings and questions into play. Patients may ask themselves, what can I expect? What is the best treatment option to pursue? Should I enroll in clinical trials? What kind of people do I need to surround myself with?

By Bridget Cook



When Peggy Shumate was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2010, she found herself at the center of a flurry of questions and new information. “I had never even met another person who had ovarian cancer - I was feeling a little alone at the time,” said Shumate.

In the United States each year, about 21,410 women each year are diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Finding herself unexpectedly among them, Shumate set out to make connections and surround herself with positive individuals. This openness to meeting others with her diagnosis and learning more about it led her to OutRun Ovarian Cancer (OROC), a nonprofit in Northeastern Ohio dedicated to funding research and education, as well as honoring those affected by the disease through an annual 5k race event and year-round fundraising initiatives. Since its founding in 2003, OROC has been able to donate over \$1,500,000 to ovarian cancer research and education in Northeast Ohio.

After getting involved with OROC in 2013, Shumate brought in dozens of her loved ones who supported her during treatment to form “Team Peggy.” The group grew from 10 to 63 members, recognizable in their maroon t-shirts. “I am very blessed to have so many family and friends who want to support OROC and me,” said Shumate. “For a couple years we were one of the largest teams. They are such a great organization, so positive, so upbeat. It’s a celebration, it really is. It really recognizes survivors and that’s what I appreciate about it.”

As Shumate navigated her initial diagnosis and following recurrences of ovarian cancer, she realized she was passionate about educating others. When OROC approached her in 2015 with a new connection to an organization called Survivors Teaching Students, Shumate was on board immediately. Teamed up with other ovarian cancer survivors of various ages, Shumate found an opportunity to bring her experience to students in Northeast Ohio. “We go to area colleges and medical schools and share our stories with future healthcare providers, letting them know about the symptoms and risk factors. It’s often misdiagnosed or diagnosed at a late stage, so we are doing all that we can,” explained Shumate. She also brings education and advocacy to OROC’s annual event, where Survivors Teaching Students regularly has a tent to spread awareness.

Survivors Teaching Students, like many other organizations, has adapted to the challenges brought on by COVID-19. In 2019, the Northeast Ohio chapter was able to reach 23 schools and 598 students. By pivoting to Zoom, those connections were able to continue.



OROC has also moved its annual run and walk to a virtual format to keep participants, patients and survivors safe. This year’s annual event will be held on Saturday, August 7th, 2021 with registration closing July 14th at www.oroc.org.

Shumate expressed her excitement for the chance to gather again with the community she’s built through OROC once COVID-19 has subsided. “It is wonderful to see that community growing. There’s more survivors at every race - treatments are getting better and we’re living longer - and OROC makes it such a wonderful, fun day.”

September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month!

Ovarian Cancer Symptoms

Ovarian cancer usually presents with a constellation of symptoms including:

- Abdominal pressure, bloating or discomfort, feeling "full"
- Constipation, diarrhea/changes in bowel function
- Frequent urination/changes in bladder patterns
- Nausea, indigestion and/or gas
- Abnormal bleeding
- Shortness of breath
- Unusual fatigue/backaches
- Unexpected weight gain, increased abdominal circumference
- Unexpected weight loss

Symptoms may be experienced by women at some point in their lives, and usually do not indicate ovarian cancer. However, if symptoms persist for three weeks or more with no diagnosable cause, contact your doctor and ask about ovarian cancer.

www.ROC.org