

11-14-08 Angels in Our Midst

She is the picture of health. She has a beautiful smile and clear radiant skin. She loves to have and loves to live for her many children. She is a marvelous housekeeper, with organizational skills keeping her hectic life on a steady course. She has a dedicated husband and supportive extended family; her Mom helps with little ones so that she can volunteer at the local elementary school. Sounds perfect doesn't it?

All the above is perfectly wonderful. Nothing changes that. However, she has recently received the news that she has breast cancer. Life, as she and her family have known it, has been turned upside down with the news and with the reality of medical appointments, surgery and chemotherapy. How will they cope? How will they cope without worrying about their children? How will they maintain a sense of balance and normalcy with their children?

I suppose that everyone who goes through treatments for cancer does, to varying degrees, experience similar concerns. Some of us are fortunate enough to live in a community that rallies to support those in need. The young woman who is currently being treated for breast cancer has discovered that she lives in such a community. I would like to tell you how much they care and pass along some of their caring ways.

As soon as friends and neighbors found out, they met and organized a method of helping that would deliver much needed services without interfering with family schedules or invading their privacy any more than was necessary.

Clearly, a go-to person was needed for scheduling babysitting, childcare, and child oriented activity inclusion. Check.

Clearly, a go-to person was needed for arranging help with ordinary housework and cleaning. This was something that could be offered or paid for. Check.

Clearly, a go-to person was needed for assisting with meals and it would help if someone could offer their freezer for holding meals until needed, rather than always bothering the family with these details. Check.

How would the helpers know what the family liked to eat and how would they know what meals could be frozen and still taste great? They took advantage of a fairly new concept in meal planning: meal preparation businesses. There are several in the area now. The family in need was able to go to *Make and Take's* website (located in Halifax), and select the meals appealing to them for the next couple months. Friends, neighbors and extended family simply make an appointment to show up at the *Make & Take* facility where they easily assemble the meals chosen. The ingredients are all there. The shopping and chopping have been already been done. Layer the ingredients in a disposable pan and leave & freeze, with the cooking instructions on the pan.

While the young mother is undergoing chemotherapy, she not only benefits from the well organized assistance of friends and neighbors, she is given reason to have fewer worries than she would have, to cope better with all that no one wants to cope with and to be happy. Yes, she can be thankful in the midst of grief and that thankfulness brings grace and peace and joy. This means that the friends, family and neighbors deliver more than meals, childcare and housekeeping. They deliver hope. When there is hope, the person in need of it produces healing chemistry within her body and mind. Call it the placebo effect, faith healing, stress reduction or whatever you wish, but it is real and science backs it up.

While we pray for and expect her recovery, healing has already begun with the broadly cast net of real and supportive health care that only friends, family and neighbors can add to the medical profession. We pray for the future but in the present we already walk among angels. Some angels even get sick but when they do, others come to their aid. Miracles do happen. They just have to be recognized.

Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for the Town of Halifax. Her Aunt Dorothy told her about the efficacy of prayer. She is interested in your stories of healing and can be reached at 781 293 6768 or cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us