

October 2005

Women's Inc.

By Women, For Women, About Women in Central Arkansas

A focus on staying healthy

A helping
hand
for HAVEN

'Cooking for
a Cure'

On a mission to help others



My 'mammo' moment

It's not my favorite thing to do but it's near the top of my personal "to do" list every year. I do it for me but just as important I do it for my husband, Tom, and our children, James, Emily, Laura and Joe.

The approximate 20 minutes it takes for my annual mammogram is time well spent in my book.

This year's exam, however, has taken on new meaning, and this time I'm doing it for others, too. I'm doing it for my friends Linda White and Kathleen Walker.

Last fall, I received news that Linda and Kathleen were diagnosed with breast cancer. I'm sure my reaction of shock was shared with others around these two special women.

Linda, a mother and grandmother, is an incredible person who showers those around her with love and support. Kathleen, whose daughter is in elementary school, is extremely talented and fun to be around.

Both women are full of life and have much to live for.

While I continue to offer prayers and support for both friends, I feel extremely helpless in the battle they are waging.

It was in that feeling of helplessness that I searched for a way to help them while also reaching out to other women about the importance of early detection in the battle against breast cancer.

It occurred to me that by sharing my mammogram experience with readers that maybe other women might be motivated to follow suit.

A special thanks to Samantha Huseas who captured "my mammo moment" with her camera and to Misty Ferguson, a mammographer at the Conway Regional Women's Center. Both were eager to help others.

With the exception of Samantha's camera clicking away, the procedure was pretty much like it has been. I was escorted to a cozy little room and left to disrobe from the waist up. Donning what I describe as a "glorified paper towel," Misty soon came to get me.

In the short time it took to capture all the views needed for my mammogram films, Misty shared with me her thoughts on why women skip their annual mammogram, including fear, denial and previous exam experiences that were unpleasant.

In some cases, the delay in seeking medical help left doctors with few treatment options. The women died.

While there was no obvious problem during the exam, I did not breathe a complete sigh of relief until my letter came a week or so later that stated nothing was found.

I thought of Linda and Kathleen. They didn't get letters like that.

It isn't something I'm proud of but I gotta tell you that I am perhaps the biggest weenie when it comes to medical procedures - mine or anyone else's. Just ask my mom and my husband.

But ladies, a mammogram



Sonja Keith (right) and her friend Linda White.



Sonja Keith (left) and Misty Ferguson, a mammographer at the Conway Regional Women's Center.

is a piece of cake. The pain from a paper cut or stubbed toe hurts much worse than any discomfort from "the squeeze" associated with a mammogram.

Really.

As women, we work so diligently to care for those around us - parents, family, friends and co-workers - but too often we don't do a good job taking care of ourselves. We make great-sounding excuses

for putting off what we know deep down we need to take care of - our own health.

How can we take care of others, if we don't take care of ourselves?

This month's issue of Women's Inc. - dedicated to my friends Linda and Kathleen - is devoted to "Staying Healthy." My hope is that you will find the information useful.

If you haven't had your mammogram, please call now and make your appointment. Get your cholesterol checked and take good care of your heart. If you noticed something different about your body, contact your physician immediately.

The earlier problems are detected, the better.

Don't wait.

Sonja J. Keith

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