

## A SURVIVOR HELPS OTHERS BEAT BREAST CANCER

By Michelle F. Solomon

Lisa Boccard has survived more odds than she can count in her fight against breast cancer. This may explain her upbeat attitude: "Instead of saying 'Why me,' I say, 'Why not me?'"



From left to right: Dr. Mark Shachner, medical director of the Women's Diagnostic & Wellness Center and co-founder of the Annual Race for Women's Wellness, Lisa and Lisa's brother Vincent.

Lisa was only 29 when she was diagnosed with Stage Three breast cancer. After 10 years, she believed she had fought off the disease, but then 11 years and one day from her first diagnosis, she learned that she had metastatic breast cancer. In this most advanced stage of breast cancer (Stage IV), cancer cells spread past the breast to other areas of the body where they continue to grow and multiply. "This time around, it will be much different. I will be treated for this disease for the rest of my life," Lisa said to herself. When the discovery was made in 2003, she was told she had only five years to live. Now at 47, she's determined to prove the skeptics wrong. "I am in my sixth year. Once I realized I would not accept the doctor's prediction, I was ready to move forward with the fight."

This fighting spirit has led her to be a champion against breast cancer, putting herself on display through a photo exhibit for those who are frightened of the disease, comforting women who are already suffering and helping the non-insured get breast cancer screenings.

Each year the Lisa Boccard Breast Cancer Fund contributes to the cost of mammograms for women in need who live in the city of Coral Springs. Inspired by Lisa's efforts, her brother Vincent, who is vice mayor of Coral Springs, and his wife, Terry Boccard, launched the fund in partnership with Broward Health Coral Springs Medical Center's Women's Diagnostic & Wellness Center.

"Last year we funded 189 mammograms, and 10 women were diagnosed with breast cancer," she says. The early detection could mean a life-saving diagnosis for those who may not have had the chance if not for the Fund, observes Lisa. She is also the subject of *The Cure Package*. Photographed by Lynn Parks, *The Cure Package* was an exhibit of 15 portraits taken of Lisa during various stages of her illness. "It wasn't easy for me to share my life in those photos, but if I can put myself out there to reach people and put things into perspective for someone touched by this disease, it's all worth it," explains Lisa.

Through her ever-present optimism, Lisa has found the silver lining in an otherwise dark cloud. "If it wasn't for cancer, I wouldn't be doing any of this. Maybe this is how my life was supposed to turn out," she says.