



Sandy Cassanelli of Glastonbury

Breast Cancer “Metavivor”

Sandy Cassanelli – wife, mom of two girls, business owner – has one more title that did not exist even a decade ago: “metavivor.”

A metavivor is a person who’s not only living with metastatic Stage IV breast cancer, but who’s also trying to help others live with it, too, by raising awareness of the need for research that could improve treatment and therefore the length and quality of patients’ lives.

Diagnosed and treated for breast cancer in 2013, when she was 37, Sandy was stunned to learn just two years later that the cancer had spread to her liver. “Dying was not an option,” Sandy says. “I have two amazing, strong daughters who are the apples of my eye, and I need to help them grow up and become successful, confident women. I needed to find a cure!”

In 2015, she founded “Breast Friends Fund,” a grass-roots non-profit whose mission is to raise money to support metastatic breast cancer research at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, where Sandy is being treated. Joined by an army of pink-clad volunteers, she and her husband Craig, who are co-owners of Greenough Packaging & Maintenance Supplies, have thus far raised more than \$647,000 for Dana Farber through an array of fundraisers based in their hometown of Glastonbury.

Since she and Craig personally cover all fundraising expenses, 100% of the money raised goes directly to research. Their long-term goal is \$1 million.

For sure, the pandemic threw them some curve balls. For one thing, Sandy and Craig had to turn their biggest fundraiser, “Taste the Cure,” into a virtual event; they not only figured that out, but they also raised more than \$100,000 in the process.

On top of that, Sandy has had to travel alone to Dana Farber for all of her appointments, treatments, and scans – and was alone when she received difficult news about failed treatments and a recurrence of her cancer. Twice.

Ever the optimist, Sandy prefers to focus on the good that came out of the past 18 months. Because of her diagnosis, she had to work remotely, even though their company was deemed an essential business because they sell supplies to health care organizations. She worried about the burden on her husband – and they all worried that her husband could possibly bring the virus home.

Yet she also cherished the bonus time with their daughters Samantha, 19, and Amanda, 15, who were also home, attending school remotely. “We enjoyed our lunches and many laughs together,” she reports with a smile.

“I cherish every minute I get to spend with my family,” says this metavivor. “Each day is a gift!”