Five years later came the basal cell skin cancer. It was not a very threatening cancer, but facial plastic surgery was tricky and very painful. In 2017, Benditt faced her fourth and worst cancer experience. Although the breast tumor was detected early, meaning successful treatment was promising, the lumpectomy surgery and radiation were very difficult. She was in pain and felt her weakened body failing her.

Adding to her frustration was the struggle to find resources to help her recover more comfortably. She didn’t need pink ribbons, sassy T-shirts and flowers; she needed aluminum-free deodorant, burn salves and a seat belt mini-pillow to prevent chafing. Moreover, with a lighter appetite and a family of picky eaters, gifts of heavy casseroles and other foods, though deeply appreciated, were not always useful.

“The problem with most cancer treatments is that patients don’t know what they’re going to need to help them self-soothe until they need it right away,” Benditt said. “And I wondered, where is the resource to help cancer patients proactively plan for treatment and recovery?”

At her post-treatment “Finish Line” party, the idea for Balm Box was born. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced a break from other activities, Benditt, a marketing professional, launched her new business. The unique, web-based boutique now offers products to make life a little easier for breast cancer patients undergoing treatment.

“Maybe there is some crazy kismet in the universe,” Benditt said. “The past 10 years of cancer treatments leading me to the launch of something great.

“Sometimes the finish line is actually the starting line.”

The Pink Power Luncheon is one way the Johnson Cancer Research Center goes beyond research to serve the community, working to inform people about cancer and risk reduction, and, ultimately, decrease breast cancer mortality through education.