



# Self-proclaimed 'medical miracle' shares her story at Pink Power Luncheon

By Marcia Locke

After surviving four cancers in eight years, Liz Benditt thinks of herself as a medical miracle.

Benditt shared her story at the 11th annual Pink Power Luncheon for breast cancer awareness on Oct. 23, 2020. The virtual event, co-sponsored by the Johnson Cancer Research Center and Susan G. Komen Kansas and Western Missouri, was attended by more than 80 people.

With a pink brick wall Zoom background and a friendly smile, Benditt gave her inspirational presentation "The Finish Line is the Starting Line." She spoke openly about those grueling years of cancer treatments, side effects and feeling burdensome, and about turning it all into a new beginning.

In 2009, at the age of 36, Benditt was diagnosed with melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer. The fair-skinned mother of two young children faced the possibility of dying within a year. Fortunately, the cancer had not spread to her lymph nodes and the surgery went well.

The following year, however, she was diagnosed with another cancer — thyroid cancer. That surgery led to a condition called hypoparathyroidism, which causes mineral imbalances, and earned her an extra two weeks in the hospital. It took years of medical and diet challenges to feel healthy again.

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.



Presentations, tours, events and information are provided to educate about cancer, risk reduction and research.