

Cancer patient's network of support

Krista Colvin's friends see her through tough time



Photo by Troy Wayrynen

Amy Benson, left, Debbie Oster, Krista Colvin and Angela Fadlovich share a moment together during a cooking party for the Colvin family as a way to support Krista as she undergoes treatment for breast cancer.

By Erin Middlewood
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Photo by Troy Wayrynen

Angela Fadlovich, left, gives her friend Krista Colvin a hug after offering her soup during a party to make meals for Krista and her family as she undergoes treatment for breast cancer.



Photo by Troy Wayrynen

Krista Colvin organizes her medical records at Brenda Snell's house as her friend leads other women in preparing a batch of eight meals for Krista's freezer.



Lara Blair



Brenda Snell

If you go

- **What:** Camas Girls Night Out to benefit the Southwest Kearney Breast Center and Breast Friends, sponsored by Cascadia Women's Clinic and the Downtown Camas Association.
- **When:** 5-9 p.m. Thursday.
- **Where:** Registration is at Journey Church, corner of Fourth and Birch streets in Camas.
- **Cost:** \$15; includes a tote bag and 10 raffle tickets for prizes.
- **Info:** <http://downtowncamas.com/>.

***Editor's note:* This story is the latest installment in our continuing series following the journey of Krista Colvin in ["Coping with Cancer."](#)**

Krista Colvin taps away on her netbook as drugs drip into her body through a port in her chest.

An organizer by profession, Colvin doesn't let breast cancer keep her from using her time well. She takes charge of the four hours she spends each week in chemotherapy.

She works on preparations for Thursday's Camas Girls Night Out to raise money for breast cancer treatment and support. After being diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer in March, it feels more pressing that the cause has to vie for scarce resources in a tight economy.

She's put some aspects of her organizing and media business on hold since getting sick, so she relishes working on the event, which invites women to spend the evening in downtown Camas shopping, dining and socializing. Posters throughout downtown will feature quotes from Krista, a 43-year-old mother of two.

"It's a way to bring my personal journey into the event," Krista says.

That journey includes women pulling together. Friends rally around Krista. Research shows such social support is a key to surviving cancer.

“Attitude really matters,” says Dr. Kathryn Kolibaba, Krista’s oncologist at Northwest Cancer Specialists. “You can definitely see the difference. And part of that is related to social support.”

The Camas event comes just three months after Krista first felt a lump in her breast. Not sure what to do, Krista turns first to her friend Sandy Krahn, a 52-year-old breast cancer survivor.

They meet at a cafe, and as they talk, Krista’s friend Lara Blair walks in. Lara had photographed Sandy for “Hope Stories,” a book about breast-cancer survivors. Lara sees distress in Krista’s face. When she hears Krista’s having trouble getting an appointment with her doctor, Lara says, “Give me the phone.” She calls Southwest Kearney Breast Center to get Krista an appointment.

“We would all do things for our friends, but we would move heaven and earth for Krista,” Lara, 39, says later.

It takes Krista a while to fully realize that. Ever the organizer, Krista assigns her closest friends to manage different aspects of her life. But she still has trouble admitting how much help she needs.

She underestimates how overwhelming all the medical appointments would be. She talks with her husband, Mike, to pick the most important ones to attend together. But given that he works on commission as a financial adviser, any work he misses is that much less money for medical bills.

Krista doesn't want to bother friends who have kids to get off to school. She goes to most appointments alone.

Her outlook changes on about the seventh in a rapid series of appointments: a test to determine if the cancer in her breast had spread to the rest of her body. Afterward, she walks out the clinic doors, sits on the curb and sobs.

When she blogs about it, friends e-mail and call to scold her. The resounding message: "Why did you do that? I would have taken you."

After that, friends take her to nearly every appointment.

In helping Krista, her friends play to their strengths. Fellow organizer Brandie Kajino sits with her in chemo and they work side by side. Lara and Krista have been meeting for years to keep each other accountable in their respective businesses; now they do it over chemo

instead of coffee. Another friend scores standby plane tickets so Krista can fly to see her parents.

Brenda Snell, a former personal chef, puts out a call: “Hey girlfriends, who wants to come over and cook for Krista?”

As the women assemble Mexican chicken bundles and chop veggies for minestrone, Krista stays out of the kitchen for fear her rapidly thinning hair will fall in the food.

Instead she camps out on Brenda’s family room floor to organize medical paperwork and soak in the feeling of female togetherness.

Breast cancer used to be a tangential cause for Krista, not a personal enemy. She served as a sounding board for her friend Lara as she crafted her book “Hope Stories” and photographed Southwest Foundation’s Pink Power events, one of which Krista emceed.

“What if one of us gets it,” Lara recalls Krista saying at the time.

Pink Power in 2007 and 2008 raised \$4 million toward building the \$5.7 million Southwest Kearney Breast Care Center, which opened last year.

Now Pink Power is turning its efforts to raising money to upgrade Southwest Washington Medical Center's special-care nursery.

That's why Krista advocated for the Kearney Center to be a beneficiary of the Camas Girls Night Out. She worries about breast-cancer fundraising declining in the community. Others, however, say the breast-cancer cause — with pink this and pink that — eclipses fundraising for other kinds of cancer.

For Krista, the fundraising provides a focus. Working on Thursday's event pulls her through a tough time. A second spot in her breast tests positive for cancer. "It's like hearing you have cancer all over again," she says.

It means she'll undergo surgery to remove both breasts.