



ONE WOMAN DEALING WITH THE FEAR OF BREAST CANCER: PART 1

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter

Cancer takes many forms and attacks practically every organ and body part. Sometimes people have a gene that can cause cancer, but they never have to suffer from it. Carla Curran is one of those people. She has a gene called the BRCA gene (a form of breast cancer) which runs in her family. Even though she did not have to deal with having cancer, she took preventative measures but ended up with major problems with her breasts. The ordeal she went through, which will be explained in these stories, caused her to form a fundraising group 12 years ago, called "We Fight Like a Girl". The organization raises money and awareness for women dealing with breast cancer. With the exception of the time during COVID, they hold a fundraiser event every year. The 12th annual event is going to be held on October 23, 2026, at Hudson Mill at the Garner Arts Center at 5 pm.

"It includes a donation to the Young Survival Coalition, a seat for a buffet dinner, and then one raffle entry so they could put that in any prize that the guest would like." Curran explained.

What prompted this? You say it's your 12th year doing this.

"We skipped one. So, it really would be 13, but we skipped COVID. I found out that I was BRCA positive and, when I was 22 I had a lump removed. Due to that in my family history, I was encouraged to be tested for the BRCA gene, and I'm BRCA positive and so is my mother, so that means my risks of breast cancer and gynecological cancers are much higher." Curran said.

Both of her sisters tested and they're negative, so when they found that out, she started to be monitored and every 4 months she went for an MRI and then 4 months later ultrasound mammogram and she was being monitored and exposed so much it was recommended by a surgeon that I should consider having a mastectomy at that point.

"When I was 27, I had a prophylactic double mastectomy, and I had implants put in and it was fine. I recovered.

I was engaged. A week later, I got married. Everything was good to go. Then, I had a capsular contracture in one of the implants."

Capsular contracture occurs when the scar tissue (capsule) that naturally forms around a breast implant becomes abnormally tight or hard, compressing the implant and potentially causing discomfort or changes in breast shape and position. This is the body's immune response to a foreign object, forming a protective layer of collagen fibers around the implant. (Wikipedia.) While a normal capsule is soft and helps keep the implant in place, in capsular contracture the capsule thickens and contracts excessively.

"I went to a different surgeon because my plastic surgeon had moved away and, what was the capsular? There's something wrong with the implant. It's kind of deflating in a sense. It wasn't leaking, but it was just like, shrinking, deforming, so, I went to another plastic surgeon and he put in a textured implant which was very different than what I had, but he made it sound fabulous and, aesthetically I would look better, so I did that and a day later when I was home, I broke out in a rash on my arms, and I called him and he said it's totally fine, you can't be allergic, that's impossible, blah blah blah, and from that moment on I started to have symptoms."

The rash was over her entire abdomen and neck. She had issues with her eyes, and she was getting sick a lot. She had a lot of nasal things. There was just a lot of things happening and, the rash covered her abdomen for six months straight and she went to every doctor possible.

"No one could tell me what was wrong and I stumbled upon these women that spoke about breast implant illness, and I had never heard about it before that, so I called him and said, could it be possible? Could I have this? No, that's not a thing, you're crazy, it's impossible blah blah blah so I pushed anyway and I went to a different doctor that actually believed and supports breast implant illness, and I had an explant surgery done in November and a tug flap, so what that is. There's different like kind of flap procedures you could have done."

According to Curran, you can have from your abdomen, your back, and they take that and form breasts, but she wasn't a candidate for the abdomen, so they actually had to take from her inner thighs to form breasts that way. That was an 8-hour surgery.

"It was horrendous. It's great now. It was the best thing I could have done, because the implants have metals in them, black ink in them. Women have molds in their implants, and most doctors don't really acknowledge it.

<https://youtu.be/W9ltfGDDazw>

Now she's living her life. She's going on. Why did she start this foundation?

"When I had the biopsy and I started going for all the 4-month testing and everything. It was scary. I was 22. I was very young. I didn't really know what to really do. Most women, most of my friends couldn't really help. They tried to support, but none of them had really had anything like that, so I stumbled upon the Young Survival Coalition, and they advocate for young women battling breast cancer, and I joined different groups during that time just to kind of seek out others that were going through the same thing and then after my mastectomy, I said we need to do something. I need to give back because it was so nice to have outlet, somebody to talk to, even though I never met half the women that I talked to." Curran explained.

JOIN US FOR OUR 12TH ANNUAL WE FIGHT LIKE A GIRL

DATE: OCT 23RD

TIME: 5PM

LOCATION: THE HISTORIC GARNER ARTS CENTER 55 W. RAILROAD AVE. GARNERVILLE, NY

BREAST CANCER FUNDRAISER

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HUDSON'S MILL

A PORTION OF PROCEEDS GO TO THE YOUNG SURVIVAL COALITION

AGES 18+ TO ENTER | 21+ TO DRINK CASH BAR ONLY

PRE-SALE* TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE!

• TABLES BY RESERVATION ONLY

\$55 PER PERSON | SEATS 12 PER TABLE

Includes dinner & raffle entry. Tables must be reserved in advance.

reserve your table here

PRE-SALE PRICING ENDS 8/23/26

I'm here with Carla Curran and Samantha Alfonso who run an organization called We Fight Like a Girl. Tell me about the organization.

Alfonso started, "Sure, we are going to be celebrating our 12th year of planning this fundraiser, and we are beyond excited because every year just gets better and better. This year is going to be October 23rd at the Garner Arts Center in Garnerville. Hudson Mill is our partner. It is a fun evening where you can come with your friends, your husband, whoever would like to come, you can come get a table of everyone. You can just come by yourself. There's music, tons of prizes, that you can raffle or do a raffle where you raffle, you buy some tickets and you can go and it's kind of like a tricky tray. Tickets right now are \$55 until August 23rd, and then after that they will be \$65. You can find us on Instagram at we fight like a Girl.

She said that it was just like a, a relief that there were others. It sounds terrible, a relief, but others that she could talk to. She was relieved to find out she was not alone and has people she could commiserate with that understand where she's coming from.

"I have a great support system. My, Husband, my parents, my girlfriends, they're wonderful, but they don't get it. At the end of the day, they don't get it. That's because they're not going through it.



Carla Curran

Samantha Alfonso

She agreed that people can empathize but sympathy is, only gotten from somebody who's been where she is.

I am able to sympathize with her because my family suffered through my mother dying slowly from ALS in 2012 and my father from cancer in 1989.

"Yeah, but most people can't because they don't see it because they're not facing it either as a, patient or as a family member.

She was feeling bad about using certain terminology, but there is no reason for her to feel bad about terminology and about being glad she's got people around that she can relate to. If people don't have that, sometimes that, that could send you off into another whole mental and emotional downfall that they don't need.

"But having people there say, hey, you know, I'm feeling this and our fundraiser has done that for so many women, the women that come, I mean quiet every year, there's somebody else that we inspire. When you walk in to the event, we have a whole wall of pictures of women who are survivors, previvors and of course those that have passed away, we honor everyone, and every year we'll have somebody different come up to us with a different story, and just say because of us, you have helped us in some way whether it's just for a fun night out. We donated to something them and their family or just making, put a smile on their face."

Do you have a network of doctors that people work with or that you can refer people to.

"We don't, we've never done that before. I would recommend 100% the doctor that I went to and his whole practice seems to be in the same boat as him as far as like supporting women with the whole explant experience. I know there are certain surgeons that are just explant surgeons. They will not put implants in because they actually know how dangerous they are, but, if women reached out, I would 100% say go to the doctor I went to.

<https://youtu.be/ucj7PILfWQ4>

"It's really is amazing to see how far we've come and grown. the first year we did it, it was so small it was at Halligan's. She had a poster board of everyone that like donate \$25 to here, \$25 to there. Now, I mean people don't just take \$50. I mean we have one restaurant that gives us like over \$200. Just like, please take it. They look at the raffle price sheet. I've seen patrons highlight what they want to get. Once the women get out their glasses, you know they're serious. They're like, all right, we're going to put in this, this, this. Yeah, and they drop things in. It's exciting. It's a fun night."

She said that it's emotional at times, especially when the women come back, we had a woman going through. everything last year, her chemo, and she knows she's coming back this year, and she looks like a completely different person. She's not in remission yet, but she's come a long way in the year, and we've had women that come to us several years later and say like, I'm good. I'm in remission. I'm done. I'm cancer free this many years. We've sort of formed like a family of ladies, and even those that have sadly passed away, their friends come to support us and tell us. If they can't make it, they will make a donation in their honor.

Do you have people making speeches and stuff women getting up and telling their stories?

"We don't. One of the other girls, Michelle, is in charge of the mic. She always shares about things like that, but we've never actually had somebody give a speech. It is something to think about.

What are you expecting out of this at this point?

"At this point I think it's more about just getting the word out there now that Carla's dealt with. What happened recently with her, I was getting, yes, I think just making women aware that it is a thing and there is hope. Alfonso said.

"Because I had the surgery a lot of women that deal with breast cancer and they have a mastectomy, they tend to get implants. I documented my whole journey on our Instagram page so that our followers could see what I went through with the rash and everything and the surgery. I mean, it was an 8-hour surgery. I was using a walker for two months; I don't think women think about what could potentially happen after. They're so concerned about the cancer part they don't think and shame on everybody they don't think about that and not shame on the women, shame on the doctors that they're not acknowledging this more because it truly is a real thing and I was upset because I did everything preventative to protect myself and to have to deal with that was really upsetting, you know, I put my, my life in their hands and would hope that they would do the right thing for me, and I felt like I wasn't protected." Curran said.

How did she react to all that? How did it make her feel? She was mad. She felt like she was let down. She was so young when everything happened and she was really upset at that one doctor because she did so much homework and the more research she did those textured implants are the most horrible, horrible things that you could put in your body that they actually have a certain cancer that women can get from the implant itself. It's horrible to know that there's ink in them through her allergy testing, she found out she's allergic to black ink.

"You go to doctors for protection and hope, and I felt like let down by it."

That's unconscionable. That would be probably be the best word that would describe it.

"This year's like a huge celebration, sort of in a selfish way because I'm past that point now. I want women to see you can do it. I did it, you can do it. If you don't have the support at home or through family we will support you."

https://youtu.be/_9DXK6j8jg