



Above: Marie Hulsizer sits in the office of Angel Wigs of Hope.

LOVE, SUPPORT AND COMFORT

ANGEL WIGS INSPIRES HOPE, LIFTS SPIRITS

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Judy Arnold has seen the devastation and uncertainty in the eyes of women as they lose their hair and part of their identity while battling cancer. She has also seen those tears turn into newfound confidence after a beautiful wig is placed on a woman's head. Judy is a volunteer with Angel Wigs of Hope, a nonprofit that is dedicated and determined to provide some hope and uplift the spirits of every cancer guest they meet.

"When someone told me I had cancer, it was a punch in the gut. I know how they feel. Everything you have to go through wears on you," Judy said. "So to see someone leave with a wig that they love and to see their face brighten up; it is 100% rewarding."

While enduring her chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer at Florida Cancer Specialists inside The Sharon L. Morse Medical Office Building, Marie Alexander saw a few volunteers there with wigs sharing information about Angel Wigs. She was hesitant to approach them because she was nervous. She had never worn a wig before or been bald. Each time she went in for treatment, she debated if she should talk to them or just deal with the fact she was losing her long, dirty blonde locks of hair.

"When you are a woman, your hair is your pride and joy. You are taught that from an early age," Marie said. "When my hair started falling out so much, I didn't realize how prideful I was until it happened. My husband took me into the bathroom and said, 'It is time.' He sat there and took the rest of it off. We sat and cried together. You just don't know until it happens to you."

"When you are a woman, your hair is your pride and joy."

— MARIE ALEXANDER

She worked up the courage to make an appointment for a wig fitting with Angel Wigs of Hope and she loves wearing her shoulder-length light blonde wig. Her nerves returned as she showed up for her appointment but that feeling quickly went away. She said three volunteers immediately loved on her and made her feel like she was among friends as she tried on multiple wigs.

“They helped me figure out what looked good on me and what looked good with my personality. When I left there, I had to go straight to my husband who was at work,” Marie said. “He was like, ‘Oh, that looks so good and your personality is coming back.’ My husband, Steve, has lost his hair but he is a man and they are used to that in their DNA. In our DNA, we keep our hair.”

This magical transformation happens inside a cozy and welcoming room at Hope Lutheran Church in The Villages. The church donated the space to Angel Wigs of Hope. White cabinets and wall fixtures are filled with a variety of wigs that are assorted colors, lengths and styles. The wigs are free and purchased in bulk from Bella Lily by Wig Wam in Belleview thanks to continuous donations this nonprofit organization receives from individuals, businesses, resident lifestyle clubs, and other groups in and around The Villages community. A woman who is battling any form of cancer, receiving treatment, and losing their hair can call the “Angel phone” to schedule an appointment. Be ready to say what color wig and style you are seeking. On appointment days, which are Tuesday through Thursday, volunteers have several wigs ready for each individual. While sitting in a salon chair in front of a vintage vanity and mirror, Judy said the fun begins.

“They put on one, laugh and say, ‘That is not me.’ Maybe their husband is here, and they say that is not you,” Judy said. “They will take a picture and send it to their family while they are still here. They get feedback that way. We don’t send anybody off with one they don’t like.”

Sometimes the first wig a woman tries on is the perfect aha moment, yet the volunteer encourages them to put on a few more for comparison. As a former hairdresser and a breast cancer survivor, it makes Judy feel good to help somebody else feel better. Some of the other loyal volunteers have also endured their own cancer diagnosis. The energy they provide is always positive, they are empathetic, and they want the woman to feel beautiful. “All of the girls who are volunteers here are dedicated to this. It is heart-felt thing for us,” Judy said. “There were people that helped us along the way and we just want to help somebody else.”

“They were just loving on me the whole time,” Marie said about her experience. “You know when you meet people you instantly want to call a friend, well that is what this was. They were super ladies.”



Above: Bonnets are also available at Angel Wigs of Hope.





None of this support would be possible if it were not for the passionate heart of Marie Hulsizer, the creator and founder of Angel Wigs of Hope. Marie was a longtime volunteer with the American Cancer Society, which used to provide wigs to cancer patients. In Oct. 2021, Marie was told the American Cancer Society was closing all of their Cancer Resource Centers. She was asked if she wanted the wigs to start her own nonprofit. She never hesitated because she has witnessed how these wigs change women's lives. She took everything they had and formed this new nonprofit.

"It's just part of giving back. We're here for a purpose and I just feel like this is where I'm supposed to be," she said. "The volunteers are so committed to Angel Wigs and they don't even know how much they're appreciated by me and by the women we help."

"I can't say enough about how Marie handles this. Her heart is in this," Judy said. "She wants to make sure everybody is being taken care of in the proper way."

Everyone who receives a wig is educated about how to take care of it. They get a wig stand, shampoo, and other suggestions on how they can style the wig. Another Angel Wigs of Hope volunteer makes port pillows that help protect a patient's port from their seat belt, while in the car. Guests can take one and a comfort pillow that can help them as they sleep, along with turbans to keep their head warm. The Rotary Club Evening group makes care bags that are also given to each guest battling cancer. Inside the handsewn bags are a pair of socks, lotion, a notepad, and other goodies. Brighter Lipsticks, Bigger

Earrings, Inc. donates handmade earrings to this organization for these cancer warriors. And members of the Lady Crafters of Hope make Sojourn bears that the guest can pick out. Some are wearing handmade sweaters, while others have a necklace on. These are extra gifts to help them feel special.

The bear Marie Alexander picked out has blue fabric with little white hearts all over. It wears a purple and burgundy sweater with a heart-shaped pendant. When she saw the colors it reminded her of her three granddaughters. She also said the heart-shaped comfort pillow was perfect for protecting the area where her cancer was removed. Judy also received her own bear and she still has it today. She even helped to make the bears before she got involved with Angel Wigs of Hope. "It is something special to know it was made to help you get through your tough time," she said. "A lot of love went into those bears." This nonprofit has three big fundraisers every year with the next one at 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 11 at Hope Lutheran Church. Mary Jo Vitale will perform a "I feel pretty" concert at its central campus on Avenida Los Angeles. Anybody is welcome to attend and you can purchase your \$20 tickets at the church.

Angel Wigs of Hope is free to any woman who has a cancer diagnosis knowing they will lose their hair because of their treatment. You do not have to be a member of Hope Lutheran Church. **You can contact Angel Wigs of Hope at 352-888-3637, to schedule a fitting appointment. This free resource aims to provide education, care, compassion, and hope to each patient.**

PRETTY IN PINK FUNDRAISER

**HOT CHICKS WITH TATTOOS (NOT) CLUB HAVE
RAISED MORE THAN \$151,000**

Cancer, unfortunately, touches everybody's life in one way or another. Kathy Loving was 14 years old when she lost her mom to breast cancer. Since then, she has always been involved in helping to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer. When she learned about an annual fundraiser the Hot Chicks with Tattoos (NOT) club does here in The Villages, she joined the group. This year, she and Janet Broadus are co-chairs for the 4th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Fundraiser Pretty in Pink. Overall, this event has garnered more than \$151,000, donated to the UF Health Leesburg Hospital Foundation's free mammogram voucher program. "The community outreach has been so amazing that it makes you love living here that much more," Kathy said. "Everybody pitches in and groups around The Villages have pitched in."

According to Erica Lebo, Executive Director & President UF Health Leesburg and Spanish Plaines Hospital Auxiliary Foundation, the money donated by this group goes to the Community Medical Care Center. It supports those in the area that cannot afford a mammogram. These donations have been so large, the center has additional funds so they can provide even more services for those who may need further services, such as another mammogram or treatment, Erica said.

The individual has to complete an application from the Community Medical Care Center. This center is a partnership between UF Health Leesburg Hospital and First Baptist Church of Leesburg. Over the past three years, Erica said the Community Medical Care Center has provided 183 patients with a mammogram screening, of those patients 30 required additional services. "When it comes to donations, these ladies blow it out of the park," Erica said. "They are the biggest funder of our breast cancer awareness month."

**"It is just doing
something bigger
than yourself."**

— CORINNE LEATHERMAN



Above: Team leaders of Pretty in Pink with UF Health Representative Erica Lebo.





“It is a very generous community.”

— JANET BROADUS

Funds are raised through the sale of \$20 pink numbered cards that feature 25 perforated tickets on them. Those tickets can be placed in a corresponding numbered pink bag next to a gift basket filled with a variety of goodies, during the Pretty in Pink event. The club collects donations throughout the year of gift cards, lottery tickets, books, games, jewelry, kitchen items, as well as alcohol. Club members create a theme for each basket and then go shopping amongst all of the donations in Janet's home to put the baskets together. Inside an American-themed basket is a red, white and blue wreath, while another basket features various games, like Rummikub and SKYJO. There is a pink cardio drumming ball situated in the matching pink tub for those who want to exercise.

Club founder and president Beverly Spangler paired a donated black purse with a size 14 black dress and a necklace. Several members had their eyes on that, including Pat Braunschweig who was fortunate enough to walk away with three gift baskets last year. “The good part about putting these baskets together is I already know which ones I would like,” Pat said. The basket preparation began in June and on the day of the party, Pat will be making sure all baskets enter Everglades Recreation at the same time to make sure they are all in the right order. It is a well-oiled machine, and it gets improved every year, she said.



Below:
Pretty in Pink
Team Leaders.





The club also has 150 bottles of alcohol that took 10 women less than an hour to wrap and place inside gift bags. Donated bras have been bedazzled and those can be purchased, along with items for a bake sale. They also received a few larger donations, including a KitchenAid Pro Mixer, a SINGER Serger machine, and a small chest of drawers that has been refinished. To bring in even more funds for a great cause, these items will be part of a new 50/50 chance drawing this year. Those tickets are limited and available as pre-sales.

Last year's fundraiser had guests lined up all the way around Everglades Recreation patiently waiting to get in. They had 215 gift baskets and brought in \$44,000. Their largest result was \$64,000 collected two years ago. "It is a very generous community. Our goal is 200 gift baskets," Janet said. "Members of the Southern Villages Fun Girls will do the decorating for the Pretty in Pink Party. I think the tribe of girls are going to wear their pink flamingo outfits." Another group donated handmade breast cancer ribbon keychains made with diamond art. This year's Pretty in Pink event is from 3 to 6 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 13 at Everglades Recreation Center. You do not have to be present to win, as members of the club will call you if you are a lucky winner.

Beverly said the idea for this event was developed as the club was thinking about a charity they could support. At the time, Beverly's sister-in-law was fighting breast cancer, so this was an important cause they all felt connected to. The first year it was called a Pink Party after that they changed the name to Pretty in Pink. During the second year, Beverly's husband and daughters were diagnosed with the BRCA (Breast Cancer) gene. "To me, it is personal. That is where my heart was because of my family," Beverly said. "This (effort) has been amazing. The love and support we all give makes this so rewarding."



Above: Villagers wait in line for the Pretty in Pink Bingo game.



"My family has never been touched by it (breast cancer), but it is just doing something bigger than yourself," added Corinne Leatherman. ***If you want more information about the Pretty in Pink fundraiser, you can contact Janet Broadus at 423-595-4055 or dixiedreamrd@catt.com or Kathy Loving at 419-250-5430 or klov1213@gmail.com.***