

## Ann Berlin

We all lead busy lives, and sometimes it is the business that consumes our daily lives and leads us to neglect the most important things. That is, of course, until life takes us down an unexpected path and shifts those things into focus.

Ann Berlin was a professional woman – busy, and caught up in her job, she put work first and herself last. Immersed in a work-centric lifestyle, Ann had just moved to Winston-Salem for work when a new doctor urged her to get a mammogram. Up until now, Ann only went to the doctor when absolutely necessary.

“I cannot remember why I went. Being new in town, maybe I thought I needed to find someone in case of emergencies,” explains Ann. “Maybe I thought it was just time for a physical. It was 1998, I was 47. My last mammogram was 20 years prior.”

When she got the call that she had breast cancer, Ann was shocked. “There is no history of breast cancer in my biological family, at all,” says Ann. “And imagine my embarrassment as my surgeon repeated several times that I should be a spokesperson for early detection. I never did tell him how much pressure it took me to get that mammogram.”

Being new to the area, Ann had few local friends and family, and no local Komen Affiliate existed at the time to turn to for guidance. Aside from the wonderful support she received from her husband, friends, and doctors, Ann felt alone and scared on this cancer journey, but could not let her personal life get in the way of her professional life. Two surgeries and seven weeks of radiation were fit around her work schedule.

Two years later, Winston-Salem’s first Race for the Cure® \_was held. Ann registered, although not as a survivor. But after watching the survivors in pink walk across the finish line, Ann felt the need to get involved. “Somehow, I worked up the nerve to go into the Survivor tent,” explains Ann. “I walked up to the volunteer in the tent and started to sob.”

Today, Ann has been spreading the message of the importance of breast health as a dedicated volunteer with Komen Northwest NC for 12 years. She has been involved with several aspects of the organization and loves every minute of it.

“We all need to be advocates for our own health, and that includes getting regular check-ups, doing self-exams, and getting recommended screenings like mammograms,” says Ann. “When you are young, you think good health is a given. But illness and accidents can hit anyone.”

Now, Ann is excited about the opportunity to spread the message even further – through her role as a 2016 Komen Northwest NC Face of Breast Cancer for Davie County. Her message as a Face is twofold: that Komen is making a local difference through grants that provide mammograms and other necessary



services and that putting yourself first, as well as being aware of your risk is crucial to surviving breast cancer.

“Take steps to keep yourself healthy,” says Ann. “Get regular check-ups and screening. Understand your body language and take heed of changes. No one is immune from life’s challenges. Good health is vital to a happy future!”