



Kathy's Story **By Kathy Simandl**

"I found a local cancer-centered aid foundation called "ThriveWell" — which has been a Godsend for support and financial assistance! The people who run this privately funded organization really understand how a cancer diagnosis can consume your life, and they offer the kind of assistance that *really matters!* I simply couldn't do the treatments I need without them."

How was I "impacted" by my cancer diagnosis? ...Like I was hit by a MACK TRUCK!!

But seriously, my diagnosis has changed my entire life. Unlike many, I was not emotionally shattered when I first heard I had cancer, I never shed a tear. But, DEALING with it is an entirely different matter. In my case, it was necessary for me to temporarily move away from my husband of 54 years and to a whole different country! Granted, he and I had, together, toured the city's medical district and checked out the best places for me to manage this unexpected development in our lives. But, my doctor said I needed to try twice-weekly treatments of my recurring malignancy, for over six weeks. And, two months in an extended-stay hotel was the only reasonable solution for me as a retired schoolteacher being treated under Medicare (and not having a car with me). Even this modest lodging choice — without help — might have been unsustainable. Then there's little things like food for two months, transportation, and any number of small things I need during such a long stretch away from home. Cancer is having a large impact on my husband's and my fixed retirement income!

But my advice for anyone just diagnosed: There is help out there. You just gotta ask. And keep asking. Where I am in San Antonio, Texas, I found a local cancer-centered aid foundation called "ThriveWell" — which has been a Godsend for support and financial assistance! The people who run this privately funded organization really understand how a cancer diagnosis can consume your life, and they offer the kind of assistance that *really matters*: transportation, lodging rebates, and even help with food costs! I simply couldn't do the treatments I need without them.

As for coping mentally with the dreaded diagnosis, I can only say what has worked for me. As mentioned above, I wasted no time allowing the initial shock to devastate

me. You've heard the homily: "knowledge is power"? Well, in my hopes to defeat the cancer, that's where I went first to find strength. I had a thousand questions about my diagnosis of bladder cancer, and I spent hour after hour reading articles and researching everything from treatment methods to new drugs to clinical studies. This helped me to feel I at least had *some* control over what had happened to me. Plus, knowing I would be receiving help from ThriveWell gave me a mental boost too; the "kindness of strangers" is a powerful motive for hope!

It also helped that I'm 75 years old and retired. But, what if you're not? And what if you're terrified to find out any details about your diagnosis? Well, you're still likely to have your life consumed by cancer, and you're still going to need support of one type or another. Let your friends know. You will be surprised at what an outpouring of positive vibes you'll receive through even just email and messaging. I sure was!! Many people would be aghast to leave their family, even their home town for cancer treatment, but I try to look at my solo stay in San Antonio as an "Adventure." There are so many new things to experience here for me! I don't have the leisure to wallow in self-pity because I'm too busy concentrating on LIVING here, and looking at all my novel experiences as absorbing challenges.

So, keep seeking knowledge, keep learning new skills, ask for help, then face your fears by taking action against them. That's all you can do.