



“Because They Cared”- We Survived!

By Mellve Shahid, Sr. – Founder & Executive Director, The Empowerment Network, Inc.

As we step into a new year and a new chapter in the history of The Empowerment Network, I am filled with gratitude, reflection, and hope. This year, 2026, holds special meaning for me personally. As I assume the new role of Executive Director and continue the journey I began as founder, I want to set a tone for the year that truly reflects our vision, mission, and the heart of who we are. That is why I chose our theme for 2026: **“Because They Cared.”**

For so many of us, survivorship didn’t begin in a doctor’s office; it began with someone who cared enough to say, “You need to get checked.” It began with a spouse who wouldn’t stop worrying, a friend who kept calling, a loved one who refused to let fear have the final say, or a doctor who went out of their way to save our lives. These caregivers were the voices of reason and love when we needed it most. **Because They Cared**, we found the strength to face the truth, seek help, and fight for our lives.

This year, we honor those quiet heroes, the caregivers and doctors who stood in the background but made all the difference. They are the strength behind our survival stories, the hearts behind our healing. They comforted us through the hardest nights, lifted us when our spirits were low, and reminded us that we were never alone. Their compassion was more than kindness; it was the power that kept us going. Their love became our lifeline.

“Because They Cared” is not just our theme for the year, it’s our declaration of gratitude and our call to action. It is our reminder that care saves lives, that love gives hope, and that none of us can do this work alone. This year, The Empowerment Network will shine a light on the caregivers and doctors who have walked this journey with us. We will tell their stories, celebrate their sacrifices, and say with full hearts, “thank you”.

As we move into this new season, our mission remains strong: to educate, empower, and save lives. But in 2026, we will do it with a renewed sense of appreciation for the people who make survival possible. Because at the core of every survivor’s story is someone who refused to give up, someone who cared enough to act. Care and caring are not small acts; they are the roots of hope and the soil in which love grows. Without them, cancer survivors forget how to heal.

The caregivers of The Empowerment Network are truly extraordinary women, strong, graceful, and powerful in ways that go far beyond their roles as wives, mothers, and grandmothers. They are the quiet strength behind the scenes and the radiant light that keeps hope alive for the men and families they care for. Every day, they give of themselves selflessly, yet never lose sight of who they are.

These women embody what it means to be **Divas**, not just in style or appearance, but in spirit and attitude, “**Because They Cared**”. They walk with confidence, carry themselves with dignity, and face life’s challenges with courage and grace. Their beauty shines from the inside out, reflecting love, compassion, and resilience.

Being a **Diva** is more than glamor; it’s about purpose and poise. These caregivers know how to uplift, encourage, and empower even when their own hearts are heavy. They bring balance to chaos, peace to pain, and laughter to moments that need light. In every way, they are the total package: strong, stylish, spiritual, and steadfast.

So as we begin this year, let this be our rallying cry: **Because They Cared**, we survived. **Because They Cared**, we thrived. **Because They Cared**, The Empowerment Network continues to stand as a light of hope for families in the STL and across this nation.

We are here because someone believed in us, fought for us, and loved us enough to see us through. Now it’s our turn to carry that same spirit forward, to care for others, to empower new survivors, and to keep saving lives. Together, we will keep pushing, keep building, and keep shining, **Because They Cared**, we are alive.

 2026 — The Year of the D.I.V.A.S. (Caregivers of TEN)

Dedicated | Inspiring | Victorious | Amazing | Sisters

*Celebrating the women whose hearts never tire, whose faith never fades, and whose love lights the path of healing. Our D.I.V.A.S. are the backbone of The Empowerment Network, devoted caregivers, wives, mothers, and grandmothers who stand strong beside our cancer survivors with grace, courage, and compassion. We love you **caregivers and Divas**.*

This is your year to celebrate!!!