

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

By Marianne Zak

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Here are four Lake Ashton women's stories of courage and fortitude as they faced this tremendous challenge, along with their stories of triumph over breast cancer.



Seven years ago, Lydia Fichtman was asked to co-chair the Lake Ashton Pink Ribbon

Breast Cancer Golf Tournament. Two weeks later, she was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer following her annual mammogram. The coincidence was not lost on her. She believes strongly that "Every woman should have a mammogram yearly, no questions." Lydia has been cancer-free since the fall of 2020. At Watson Clinic, she endured chemotherapy, immunotherapy, seven weeks of radiation and three surgeries, all during the COVID quarantine. Due to COVID, her devoted husband, Paul, sat in their car waiting while his bride received her treatments.

Lydia has been married to her high school sweetheart, Paul, for 50 years. They recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary by cruising to Alaska with their four children and their families. A highlight of their cruise was when the captain officiated as they renewed their wedding vows in front of their 11 grandchildren. Lydia laughingly told her family, "We are spending your inheritance with you."

Lydia and Paul moved to Lake Ashton in 2018 and reside on Riviera Court. Besides golf and co-chairing the annual breast cancer golf tournament, they cruise somewhere each year. Other destinations have included Africa, French Polynesia, Tahiti, Antarctica, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and the Danube River. They look forward to visiting Japan, Australia and New Zealand in the future. Breast cancer has adjusted their outlook. She said, "There are no shops in Heaven."

12

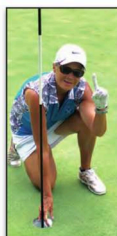
Dawn Neigh of Hogan Lane has been married to Ken for 51 years, and together they have raised two daughters. The Neighs moved to Lake Ashton in February 2015 from Michigan. In 2023, she had her annual mammogram and was diagnosed with HER2-positive stage 1 breast cancer. She went to Watson Clinic, where she endured 34 radiation treatments and chemotherapy every three weeks for one year. Ken was with her at every chemotherapy treatment and said, "That's what I signed up for." She had surgery to check her lymph nodes and, finding no cancer, she rang the bell in December 2024. Dawn was grateful for the many people in Lake Ashton who, upon hearing of her diagnosis, reached out to her and were "so good to me." Dawn and Ken celebrated her victory by hosting a party in January 2025 for more than 80 Lake Ashton residents who had "touched me in some way." She said, "Just little things; they didn't realize what they did. It was a hug, walking with me, sending a card or a phone call." The Eagle's Nest was decorated in pink, with pink boxing gloves as centerpieces. Dawn, an avid golfer, has sponsored a hole for the annual breast cancer tournament every year since she beat cancer.



Carole Ferrieri of Birkdale Drive has lived in Lake Ashton for 22 years. She and her husband, Bill, grew up across the street from one another in Greenwich Village, New York. In May, they will celebrate 64 years of marriage. They have three daughters and five grandchildren. In 1992, they moved to Boynton Beach, Florida, before discovering Lake Ashton. Five years ago, Carole's December mammogram revealed three spots on her breast. She chose to receive her care at AdventHealth in Haines City and was assured that the cancer had been caught in time. She had a mastectomy but did not need chemotherapy, radiation or lymph nodes removed. Carole did not need therapy and was able to quickly resume her active lifestyle. Her insurance allows her three bras a year and a prosthesis every two years, including one for a bathing suit.

Carole said, "I told my daughters to make sure they go for a mammogram every year." Carole, is an avid golfer, and plays cards weekly, especially poker and Hand and Foot. Her family is her greatest joy, and she always looks forward to traveling to visit them.

Tami Donnelly, who is 16 years breast cancer-free, lives on Sawgrass Drive and has lived in Lake Ashton for 2 1/2 years with her husband of 30 years, Dana. They share three children. The Donnellys moved from Houston, Texas, to be close to elderly parents in Lake Wales. Tami had a mammogram 17 years ago, and although something was suspicious, she was told to come back in six months. She was her own best advocate and sought a second opinion with a biopsy. Ironically, the lump that was biopsied was benign, but the rest of her breast was 99% cancerous in the milk ducts. Tami chose a double mastectomy so she would not have to worry as much in the future. She was told that a machine would not have discovered this cancer for another seven years. She said, "All by the Grace of God, I went to a breast doctor." She decided on expanders and silicone implants. Although she suffered through surgery and reconstruction, she said, "Some days I feel guilty because so many women that had breast cancer had to go through so much more than I did. Many women become sick, lose their hair, their livelihood, and even their marriage. I only had to give up two boobs; others go through much more." She still checks herself every month.



During Tami's first golf game after her reconstruction, she got a hole-in-one. The Atlanta Journal and Constitution wrote about the achievement with the headline, "There Is Life After Cancer." This September, at the World Amateur Golf Tournament in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Tami came in second place in her flight of 49 golfers. She has played there for 11 years. Besides golf, Tami enjoys cards, wine with her girlfriends, road trips, casinos and annual trips to Las Vegas.

This month is the Lake Ashton Pink Ribbon Breast Cancer Golf Tournament benefiting the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida. Last year, more than \$65,000 was raised through the Lake Ashton Pink Ribbon fundraiser. Women who need financial assistance while undergoing treatment may receive help with their mortgage, Uber rides to the hospital, utilities, daycare and other expenses. One in every eight women is diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. The journeys these four Lake Ashton women generously shared for Breast Cancer Awareness Month are yet another reason why Lake Ashton is "Simply the Best."



Please see more information about the activities at the Clubhouse and HFC in October to promote

Breast Cancer Awareness on page 28, and the Pink Ribbon Golf Tournament coming up on November 14 on page 44.

**Talk to a real person
— and neighbor —
about your
Medicare options**

Christine Graves
INSURANCE



LA RESIDENT | 21+ YEARS EXPERIENCE



Call or Text (863) 514-5368
www.cgravesins.com

NOTE: I do not offer every plan available in our area. I represent 6 carriers, offering 122 plans. For all options visit: [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) • 1-800-MEDICARE • State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) – free, local help for Medicare questions

13