

A thriver's mission to help women fight breast cancer



Photo courtesy of Jeannette Tyson Gregory



Natasha Morris
Charlotte Women's Health Examiner

Related Photo:

October 7, 2013

It was her first day at the **treatment center**. A brief tour since she wasn't due for treatment for another week. She looked around the room bordered with recliners and IV poles. Then, she looked at the women and panicked.

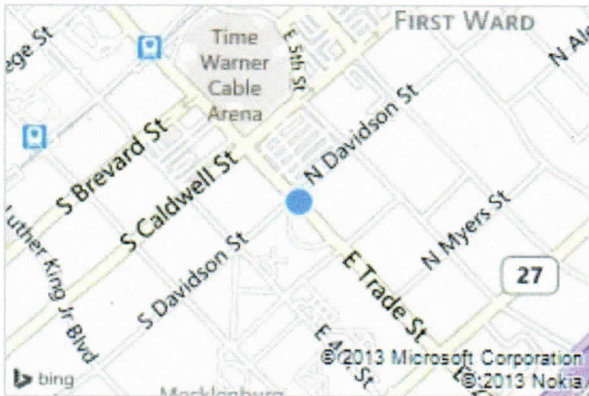
They were pale, dressed in pajamas and hats. They sat motionless with death in their eyes. Pain and loneliness lingered heavily. She turned to her husband and said, "I don't belong here."

She understood that although **chemotherapy** is a lonely process, you don't have to look lonely in the process. That's when **Jeannette Tyson Gregory** decided to change the mood.

Every week for six months, Jeannette wore big earrings, lipstick, penciled eyebrows and a radiant smile. The women often remarked how pretty she was. And before long, they too started wearing makeup and big earrings.



Photo courtesy of Jeannette Tyson Gregory



Charlotte, NC

Jeannette realized that her power to change the atmosphere could eventually change the attitude. Women undergoing chemotherapy shouldn't have to look like death. After all, breast cancer isn't about dying. It's about fighting. And there's no time to waste.

"You have to be focused on this fight," she says. "You don't have time to cry."

However, Jeannette had much to cry about. She lost her **brother and sister** to cancer five years ago, and in the midst of both tragedies, she was diagnosed and had a **double mastectomy**. And cry she did. Yet, she wasted no time and started **Celebrate Life 08**.

It's her life's mission to help, encourage and empower women fighting breast cancer. She's written eight **books**. She's established **community outreach programs** and has partnered with

Good360 to provide goods and services.

"I'm a warrior who gets in the middle of the fight," she says.

Two weeks ago, Jeannette celebrated her 59th birthday and fifth year as a survivor. "I like the word thriver," she says. No gifts, only items for gift bags for the women at the center.

Dressed in pink and white, the mother of three and grandmother of nine joined family and friends as they danced the Cha-Cha Slide, Wobbled, Cupid Shuffled and Dougied.

"I believe you should celebrate your life every day," she says, pointing to her **pink ribbon bracelet**. "I keep it before my eyes to remember what I went through, what others are going through, and how one day they're going to come out just like I did."