

Komen Detroit Race for the Cure

Survivor Skills

by Herb Gunn

When Sue McCune learned she would need a lumpectomy, she couldn't utter the words: breast cancer. And in the two and a half years since her treatment, she continued to steer clear of phrase as well as its life-saving suffix: survivor.

Like many women who have survived the disease, which is diagnosed for 180,000 women annually in the United States, McCune was hesitant to identify herself with other women whose treatment—and rate of survival—seemed more serious. And although she has participated in prior breast cancer events since her own diagnosis and treatment, she kept the distinguishing bright pink survivor T-shirts folded in a drawer.

All that changed in mid-May.

When The Detroit Tigers recognized 250 breast cancer survivors on the field before the team's game on Sunday, May 17, McCune was finally able to recognize herself among them. The event, sponsored in collaboration with Susan G. Komen



Sue McCune with Lynn VanKeuren

Detroit Race for the Cure, was the Tigers' home field rendition of the Mothers' Day celebration marked by Major League Baseball a week earlier when the Tigers played an away game.

When the breast cancer survivors arced from third base to first, McCune settled in at shortstop.

"I didn't know anyone, but by the time I walked off the field, I felt as if I had a new family," McCune said. "Being with all those women was so uplifting, and they were proud to wear those shirts. I don't know if

they had lumpectomies or radiation or a mastectomy and they don't care. All that matters is: 'I survived.'"

McCune shared the infield with a 25-year-survivor and a woman in her first year of recovery, and among them all, the first and only question necessary to break the ice of camaraderie was, "How long has it been?"

As that number grows for McCune, so grows her confidence as a mentor to other women beginning their journeys.

In April, she took a call from her best friend who said simply, "I found a lump." Within six weeks, Lynn VanKeuren had a double mastectomy and is now in her third week of radiation.

On Saturday, May 30, the best friends participated in the Susan G. Komen Detroit Race for the Cure at Comerica Park as the two survivors on the 20-plus-member race team from the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. Paul.

Lynn VanKeuren walked. Sue McCune wore her survivor's shirt.