

# Pregnant with Cancer net expands

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Patty Murray wants to reach all the 4,000 pregnant women who will be diagnosed with cancer this year.

Volunteers trained and certified under a new program run by the Pregnant with Cancer Network will help. The Buffalo-based organization was co-founded by Murray in 1997 (*pregnantwithcancer.org*.)

The network maintains a database of about 500 women from across the country who have survived cancer while pregnant. When a pregnant woman with cancer contacts the network, she is matched with a "volunteer support woman" whose diagnosis was similar. Contact between the patient and volunteer continues through the pregnancy by e-mail, telephone or mail.

Though the network primarily operates in the United States, volunteer-patient matches have been made in 15 other countries. Murray herself counseled a woman from South Africa via e-mail.

The new program, developed by two licensed, certified social workers, replaces a less formal approach to training volunteers. And it adds a certification component that involves interviews with board members and requires their recommendations.

"This newly developed certification program for our volunteer support women will help us to ensure that the women contacting us at such a critical time in their lives receive the highest quality of care and support that we can offer," Murray said. "As our network serves more women, we see this training as an essential tool to guarantee the quality of service we offer."

In the organization's early years, founders Mary Rose McDermott, Lisa Radel and Murray — who each faced a cancer diagnosis while pregnant — counseled patients



**Patty Murray, co-founder of the Pregnant with Cancer Network, lunches with nine-year-old Patrick, who she was pregnant with when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.**

based on their personal experiences.

Murray was about halfway through her pregnancy with her third child in 1995 when she found a golf ball-size lump under her armpit. She proceeded with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy, somewhat assured by research showing fetuses later in gestation are unlikely to be affected by such treatment. Son Patrick was born the following March with hair and an ounce short of 8 pounds. Murray's treatment lasted six more months, and she has been in remission ever since.

Eventually, the three women trained the volunteers to work with patients. The new training and certification program was

developed by certified social workers Christine Bylewski and Jolie Giardino. Once volunteer has completed the training, she will become a Certified Pregnant with Cancer Network Volunteer Support Woman.

The network's training materials were supported by the Western New York Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Greatbatch Inc., Eastco Media Solutions and the Clarence Herita Business and Professional Women's Club. The organization also is funded through donations and proceeds from a three-mile walk held annually in August. Last year's event drew several hundred participants and raised \$32,000, Murray said.