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### A CARING COMMUNITY

# SURVIVORS SHARE THEIR STORIES

New book tells journey of cancer through many voices

By Christina LoBrutto  
Editorial Intern

**BRANCHBURG** — Marion Behr knows the importance of early detection. Her children's suggestion to get a mammogram saved her life, she says. Now, the breast cancer survivor hopes her new book, "Surviving Cancer: Our Voices & Choices," will provide comfort to those facing cancer.

Behr is an accomplished painter, printmaker and sculptor who has lived in Somerset County for 17 years. She won her first national award when she was 7 and has been recognized and honored for her art. Behr's other publications include articles and a book on home-based business called "Women Working Home: The Homebased Business Guide and Directory."

Her new book is a compilation of stories written by 67 individuals who share their personal knowledge and expertise in the cancer process. The voices represent a variety of ages and cultures, coming from America, Canada, Cambodia, Israel and India.

"The thing about the book that I think is unique is that there are doctors, there are survivors, people who advise financially, health care providers and organization leaders," Behr said. "When you read most books, it's one person's voice, or maybe two. This is really different voices. It's strong statements from everyone."

When formatting the different stories in the book, Behr said people assumed she would organize them by who was writing (i.e. doctors, survi-

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### AT A GLANCE

Marion Behr's new book, "Surviving Cancer: Our Voices & Choices," will be re-leasted May 28. The 268-page book features a section of questions that may arise during the process and the pages where readers can find the answers. It also includes a glossary of key terms, resources for cancer patients and contributor biographies. Twenty percent of the profits from the sale of the book will be given to cancer causes. Learn more at [www.press.com](http://www.press.com).



From left: Dr. Kathleen Toomey, Pam Adams, Meera Bagle, Cheryl Hardy, Marion Behr and Dr. Angela Lanfranchi at the Center for Contemporary Art panel discussion that helped inspire Behr to compile her new book.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARION BEHR



Marion Behr with her new book.



TD Bank Ballpark now offers lean roast beef sandwiches. COURTESY OF HORIZON BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF NEW JERSEY

## Patriots serving healthier foods

New on the menu at TD Bank Ballpark: Heart-friendly fare

By Mike Deak  
@MikeDeakMyCJ

**BRIDGEWATER** — The relationship between baseball and food is enshrined in the lyrics of a song that every baseball fan learns by 8: "Take me out to the ball game. Take me out with the crowd. Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack. I don't care if I never get back."

For decades, a trip to a baseball game included the ritual foods, such as hot dogs and popcorn, and ice cold soda or beer that added to the fun and flavor of the day.

In recent years, however, major and minor league ballparks have begun offering food that some may consider mouth-watering and others think is stomach-turning.

A minor league team in Michigan offers hot dogs in a split Twinkie with whipped cream.

The Chicago White Sox have a three-pound, 12-scoop ice cream sundae served in an authentic batting helmet.

The Arizona Diamondbacks have introduced a D-Bat Dog. For \$25, you can get an 18-inch corn dog stuffed with cheddar cheese, bacon and jalapenos. Reports are that the team has had difficulty keeping up with the demand.

The Somerset Patriots, now in their 17th season, are taking a different approach. In conjunction with their long-time partners at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, the Patriots have opened Healthy Plate at TD Bank Ballpark.

While food at ballparks is not "typically healthy," Healthy Plate will have heart-friendly alternatives designed by the insurance company's certified nutritionists, said Tom Vincz, a spokesman for Horizon Blue Cross Blue



## CANCER

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vors, family members). However, she had something else in mind.

"I kept thinking that just wasn't what I wanted to do," she said. "I really want this book to be a journey. What happens is that it's just very scary. With cancer, you just don't know what direction it's going to take. I wanted this to be the kind of book that wasn't frightening and that had the survivors giving the patient a comfort zone of what happened to them and the type of doctor that helped them."

### Cancer is a journey

The idea for the book evolved over time after Behr's initial cancer diagnosis. Her early mammogram inspired her to motivate others to understand the importance of early detection. During her first radiation treatment, she noticed a pile of cradles on the side of the room. Cradles are used to hold patients in place during their treatments and are molded to each individual.

"For me, when I saw the cradles, I kept thinking there had to be a way to do something with them that could create a situation to make people aware that early detection can be a good thing," Behr said. "I asked the hospital if I could have my cradle because they told me they couldn't be reused. Then I asked for more. They ended up giving me 35."

Over the next three years, Behr created sculptures from the old cradles. The illustrations in the book are photographs of some of these cradle sculptures that depict feelings or experiences, based on comments made by cancer patients.

A complete series of sculptures was shown at Steeplechase Cancer Center and the Center for Contemporary Art in Bedminster to encourage conversation and early detection. A panel discussion on

breast cancer during the second show ultimately sparked the concept for Behr's book.

"The first girl was in her 20s, the second was in her 30s, the third person in her 40s and I had just turned 70," she explained. "They weren't like the shy, young people I knew when I was younger. If someone had cancer, they didn't talk about it. These kids got up and they were gorgeous. They were confident and they were super helpful. I was definitely blown away. We discovered that many questions urgently needed answers, and that evening, the idea for a book with this type of interaction was born."

### Not just a girl thing

Behr's daughter, Dr. Dawn Behr-Ventura, is a certified radiologist with a sub-specialization in breast imaging and body imaging, as well as certification in neuroradiology. She stressed the importance of including the less-discussed male perspective of breast cancer in the book.

"When men think about breast cancer, they envision it to be a disease that only affects the female population," she writes in her article. "Men do get breast cancer. Survival rates for breast cancer in men are stage for stage the same as women."

Male breast cancer survivor Rich Loreti shares his cancer experience in his article, "Male Breast Cancer is Real." He began researching breast lumps after his wife noticed one on his chest.

"It was weird because male breast cancer didn't surface right away," he writes. "All the information on the screen addressed women's concerns regarding the disease. However, eventually male breast cancer did appear. Ultimately all sorts of information came to the surface that made me nervous."

Loreti put off seeing a doctor for a while, but his wife finally convinced him to go. The biopsy showed that the lump was

### "It doesn't occur to most guys to do a self-exam. At least once a month, check your chest."

RICH LORETI, breast cancer survivor

in fact cancerous. He needed to have a mastectomy.

"My knowledge about male breast cancer went from nothing to an overwhelming amount within one month," Loreti writes. "Before the cancer, work and earning money were my main focus. Now I live for my wife and children. It doesn't occur to most guys to do a self-exam. At least once a month, check your chest. That's my advice."

Loreti plans to have breast reconstruction, as many women choose to do after a mastectomy.

"I'm going to a plastic surgeon next; at least I want my nipple back," he writes. "In our society, women usually wear tops at the beach, men often don't. I have my health and am grateful to be alive, but men are seen in a certain way and there's no reason not to look and feel as well as possible."

### Forming a team

In "Surviving Cancer," doctors and health care professionals share pertinent information in their areas of expertise. The doctors' articles are arranged to correspond with the usual order of visits experienced by most cancer patients.

Dr. Kathleen Toomey, medical director of the Steeplechase Cancer Center, presents the concept of a cancer team of doctors and health care professionals in her article, How to Find the Medical Team for You.

"Any cancer diagnosis is frightening," Toomey writes. "Most women fear the diagnosis of breast cancer all their lives. It is important to have the right medical team when faced with a cancer diagnosis. It takes a team to care for a cancer patient and you want to be on the very best team you can

get."

Over the years, Behr has noticed a common trend among cancer survivors.

"Through the process of compiling this book, I could not help but notice how overcoming cancer has given many survivors a mission to do something to help others," she said. "I think what happens is, they make it and they feel they need to give back in a positive way. That has been stunning to me. I think there are a lot of people who do need this kind of encouragement."

Besides providing useful information, "Surviving Cancer" strongly en-

courages early detection.

"I do think that cancer becomes so complicated as the stages get higher," Behr said. "If it can be found early, it certainly does make a difference in a person's life. I'll use myself as an example because it definitely made a difference in my life. I was really lucky. If I had waited longer, I'm sure the chances would have been much more complicated."

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