



# Role

**Rebecca Jacobs, MA, RNC, was pondering champagne choices at the grocery store for a New Year's Eve party she and her husband would be hosting that night when her cell phone rang with a call from her doctor.**

Rebecca, with an extensive background in women's health care, knew essentially what was coming—her biopsy, taken a day earlier, indicated breast cancer.

"We went ahead with the party," says Rebecca. "We gathered our great friends around us and told them right away. They were, and remain, incredibly supportive."

At the time of her diagnosis, Rebecca was director of Women's and Children's Services at Mercy Medical Center. She was quickly forced to come to grips with her new role as "the patient."

The journey began with Rebecca's annual exam Dec. 8 in preparation for cataract surgery. One of the breast health specialists in the Women's Center followed up (per usual) after the exam to tell Rebecca that additional images and an ultrasound were needed. Rebecca barely flinched, as she had a history of "call backs" due to dense breast tissue.

But the next day's round of testing raised more flags. An MRI was recommended.

"I came to work that day and I was busy," says Rebecca. "I really thought about blowing off

# FOR BREAST CANCER CAREGIVER Reversal

the MRI. But I listened to that little voice in my head and decided I'd better follow the advice we give our patients."

The MRI results raised more suspicions and her radiologist, Dr. Laura Hemann, asked Rebecca to look at the images with her. Reality was beginning to take hold. And the final look—an ultrasound-guided biopsy—left no doubt.

Rebecca knows what it's like to help guide others through the breast cancer experience. But she admits it's a whole new thing to live it herself.

At Mercy's Multi-disciplinary Breast Care Clinic, Rebecca and her physical therapist husband, Eric, met with a team of medical and radiation oncologists, her surgeon and a breast health specialist to outline a plan of care. Rebecca's plan included surgery on Jan. 20.

The surgeon verified the size of the mass and that the cancer was in one of her lymph nodes. Rebecca's treatment plan included the decision to have a bilateral mastectomy.

"It was a difficult decision and a tough time. I was thinking 'I have no idea what my body will look like.' It was a lot of soul-searching and a lot of major discussions with my husband and my health care team," she says.

In addition to surgery, Rebecca's care plan included chemotherapy, followed by radiation. Rebecca knew, of course, the chemo meant she would lose her hair—another hit to a cancer patient's self-image.

"I just haven't been able to adapt to the wig

very well," says Rebecca. "I knew I was off to a bad start when I opened the oven to take out a lasagna and the heat melted the front of my wig! It was hysterical, really."

Most often Rebecca opts for a colorful, chic turban or hat. But she admits that, too, was a difficult step. Part of her reluctance about "coming out" with the "turban look" was how it might affect the patients.

"I was afraid it would make women coming into the Women's Center feel uncomfortable," says Rebecca. "It's been interesting, though, and has taught me a lot. Some women come right up and obviously feel very comfortable in saying, 'I'm a survivor too.' It's really been an amazing show of support."

Adding to the irony is the fact that Rebecca has been a key organizer of the *Especially for You*® Race Against Breast Cancer, an event that draws upwards of 10,000 women and families.

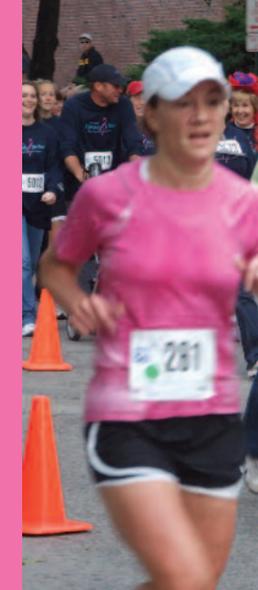
"I feel so passionate about the race because the EFY fund allows all women access to breast care services and screenings without having to

worry about financial barriers," says Rebecca. "Those services are even more important now, given the current economic state."

The EFY race is Sunday, Oct. 11. Rebecca's family is already putting together a team in her honor. And for the first time, Rebecca will be in the race on that day and joining with other survivors in a spirit of camaraderie. A champagne toast at the finish line might be an appropriate way to celebrate.

**"I opened the oven to take out a lasagna and the heat melted the front of my wig!"**

*Rebecca Jacobs  
MA, RNC*



Join us Sunday, Oct. 11, for the 19th annual *Especially for You*® Race Against Breast Cancer! Registration begins mid-July. Visit [www.especiallyforyourace.org](http://www.especiallyforyourace.org) for the latest information.

The availability of the *Especially for You* fund means financial resources do not stand in the way of women needing breast-care services.