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GALLA KESSLER/THE WORLD-HERALD

Cancer survivor Julie Pabian walks the runway during the Survivor Show at 2017's Omaha Fashion Week. This year's Survivor Show features more than 100 cancer survivors dressed by local boutiques.

# A CLINIC IN CONFIDENCE

Methodist's Inner Beauty Salon helps cancer survivors feel like — and become — models

## OMAHA FASHION WEEK METHODIST CANCER SURVIVOR SHOW

More than 100 cancer survivors, dressed by local boutiques, walk the runway

**When:** Thursday, 6 to 10 p.m.; show starts at 8 p.m.

**Where:** Omaha Design Center, 1502 Cuming St.

By CHRIS PETERS

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Julie Pabian walked into the hospital, shoulders slumping, bald head hanging.

For the past seven years, she had tried to beat back the darkness that is cancer with joy, mettle and a devil-may-care attitude.

*Mastectomy at 35? Take my boobs, she said; that way, cancer won't be a worry down the line.*

"They're like rearview mirrors — nobody really uses those anyway," she said.

And yet, as she opened the door to Methodist Hospital's Estabrook Cancer Center that day in 2016, she saw resignation in her body language. Cancer had returned — despite the earlier mastectomy — at age 43.

"I didn't have that confident air about me," she said.

By the end of that day, her swagger was back.

Pabian had visited Methodist's Inner Beauty, a specialty nonprofit salon serving cancer survivors. Inner Beauty's staff of four clinical cosmetologists helps thousands of women



MATT DIXON/THE WORLD-HERALD

**Inner Beauty Salon at Methodist Hospital's Estabrook Cancer Center helps cancer survivors and those undergoing treatment look and feel their best.**

(and men and children) reclaim the beautiful features that cancer has taken away.

"I wanted to feel pretty and I wanted to regain my womanhood," Pabian said.

The work of Inner Beauty will be showcased at this week's Omaha Fashion Week. At Thursday's show, more than 100 cancer survivors will walk the runway as models.

At Inner Beauty, clinical cosmetologists fit mastectomy patients with prosthetics that help give symmetry to their breasts. They fit chemotherapy patients with wigs, teach them how to redraw eyebrows and offer coloring services as hair grows back. They give advice for issues with skin care, nail care and a slew of other things that pop up when you're battling cancer.

"They become comfortable in their own skin — we tell them 'You are a new you!'" said Lori Fuchs, coordinator of the salon. "If we can bring transformation to them in this journey and build them up and make them feel beautiful, then we've done our jobs well."

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# Salon: Cancer survivors walk the runway with confidence

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Racks of bras, hats and scarves make the salon feel more like a bridal shop than a cancer hospital.

To say Fuchs and her staff are cheery is an understatement. They're downright delightful. The opposite of the word "cancer."

Pabian came in that day in 2016 for a mastectomy fitting — to find a bra and inserts to balance her figure.

Fuchs and Pabian dug through what Pabian called a "treasure chest of brassieres" and found one that made her stand tall.

"They have bras that are prettier than the mall sells, and they sure as heck made me feel prettier than the bras at the mall," Pabian said.



Lori Fuchs

"When I left, I was pleased enough I walked out with my shoulders back and my head up. I had a new sense of pride and beauty."

Earlier this month, a woman visited the salon after being fitted for a wig. She later wrote a thank-you letter for restoring her confidence in her own image.

"She said, 'I now want to go outside,'" Fuchs said. "Before, she didn't want to leave the house because of how bad she felt about herself."

The Inner Beauty Salon sees patients from any hospital, not just Methodist. All consultations are complimentary and covered by donations. For patients who can't afford mastectomy garments, prosthetics or other products, Inner Beauty offers financial assistance.

Inner Beauty isn't the only salon in town helping cancer patients feel better about themselves. Ne-

braska Medicine's Life Renewal Center at Village Pointe, for example, has a wig bank, and CHI Health's Image Recovery Center employs cosmetologists, mastectomy fitters and massage therapists.

In celebration of their patients, Fuchs and her team helped organize the special Omaha Fashion Week show. An army of survivors will doll up and walk to cheers and tears from friends, family and health care providers seated in the crowd.

"At first, it was terrifying and I didn't really want to do it," said Cheryl Jarosz, a cancer survivor preparing for her sixth Omaha Fashion Week Survivor Show. "But when Lori asked me, I thought of all the things she has done for me, and knowing it helps fund the Inner Beauty Salon, I thought 'How could I say no?'"

About half of the ticket sales

from the runway show go back to the salon. So Jarosz thought she should give it a shot.

"You watch them in their outfits, whether you know them or not, you're just so proud of them," she said of her fellow models. "You are just celebrating with them. There's this kind of bond and camaraderie."

"It's the club that nobody wants to be in, but the bonds that are formed are just inseparable."

Ultimately, whether it's helping cancer survivors step out onto the Omaha Fashion Week catwalk or just step out the door of their own home, the goal of the salon is to make patients walk a little taller.

"It makes them feel like themselves," Fuchs said, "and they can look in the mirror and not see cancer looking back at them."

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**INNER BEAUTY SALON**

**What:** A nonprofit salon for cancer survivors open to patients from any hospital, free of charge

**Where:** Methodist Hospital's Estabrook Cancer Center, 8303 Dodge St.

**Services:** Skin, hair and nail consultation; makeup; head shaving; wig selection; prosthesis fittings; post-mastectomy or lumpectomy garment fittings and more

**OMAHA FASHION WEEK**

**Where:** Omaha Design Center, 1502 Cuming St.

**When:** Tuesday through Saturday, 6 to 10 p.m.; shows start at 8 p.m.

**Tickets:** Start at \$40

**SCHEDULE**

**TUESDAY**

**Student Night**

**Designers:** Omaha Central, Omaha South, Nebraska 4-H, the Kent Bellows Mentoring Program at the Joslyn Art Museum and Nebraska FCCLA

**WEDNESDAY**

**UNL Student Showcase**

**Designers:** Students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's department of textiles, merchandising and fashion design

**THURSDAY**

**Methodist Cancer Survivor Show**

**Models:** More than 100 cancer survivors, dressed by local boutiques

**FRIDAY**

**Aspire: Emerging Designer Showcase**

**Designers:** Austin Tú, Anisha KillsEnemy, Hannah Hidalgo, Angela Balderston, Rebekah Lux, Courtney Barbour, Kelsey Young, Margeaux Larson, Mackenzie Esch and the duo of Gracie Olsen and Katelyn Otto

**Headlining Designer:** Korinne Zimmerman

**SATURDAY**

**Innovate: Featured Designer Showcase**

**Designers:** Amanda Casarez, Lauren Hansen, Lydia Loya, Agustin Delgado, Roger Figueroa and Miranda Hanson  
**Headlining Designers:** Juantiesha Christian, Audio Helkuik, Paulie Gibson

**MARCH 4**

**Shop the Runway**

**What:** Pop-up shop features Omaha Fashion Week designs for sale  
**Time:** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
**Cost:** Free, including brunch, coffee, mimosas and bloody marys



SARAH HOFFMAN/THE WORLD-HERALD

A model pulls off her wig during her runway walk at the 2014 show.

*“It’s the club that nobody wants to be in, but the bonds that are formed are just inseparable.”*

Cheryl Jarosz, a cancer survivor preparing for her sixth Omaha Fashion Week Survivor Show



MATT DIXON/THE WORLD-HERALD

Methodist’s Inner Beauty Salon features plenty of cosmetics, wigs and clothing. “They have bras that are prettier than the mall sells,” breast cancer survivor Julie Pabian said.



SARAH HOFFMAN/THE WORLD-HERALD

**Marla Houston gives a high-five to another model as she walks the runway during the 2014 Survivor Show at Omaha Fashion Week.**