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Cancer survivor spouse pens book on staying resilient: 'When Life Throws You More Than a Curveball'

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A cancer diagnosis is a curveball that rocks the foundations of both the patient and his or her loved ones.

It knocks you off your feet at a speed that can seem impossible to bear. Along with feelings of fear, anger, and hopelessness can come confusion - and even anger with God.

When Donna Blundred of Green Township was diagnosed in 2012 with a grade IV glioblastoma brain tumor the size of a baseball, everything in her and her family's lives suddenly and dramatically changed.

"We were numb, in disbelief," said Larry, her husband of 38 years. "I put up a good front because Donna needed a positive, affirming outlook. But I disguised and buried my pain, and it was not a good thing." (Larry and Donna have three grown children: Christine, Phil and Rob).

The tumor was removed surgically the day after she collapsed at their home, but one of her doctors told the family that "this kind of cancer always comes back." It was estimated she had six months - perhaps a year - to live.

"Doctors have to say that, because that is the history with this grade of tumor," Larry said. "But as I told a friend who visited us days after the surgery, 'Donna will beat this. I know my wife. The doctors don't.'"

And beat this, she has. In mid-July, Donna received her third consecutive "clear" report from Dr. Richard Curry, who has worked closely with the couple for almost three years.

"We know that 'clear' does not offer any future guarantees," Donna said. "But we know that 18 months after the surgery and diagnosis, two new tumors emerged. Today, they are gone."

Culminating this journey was Larry's vision to write a book aimed at helping others thrive, not just survive, a life event – be it cancer or otherwise – that can turn a life upside down.

The book is titled "Staying Resilient: When Life Throws You More Than a Curveball" (Winters Publishing, Greensburg, 2017).

"I started writing this book for men, and with a focus on coping with a cancer diagnosis," Larry said. "However, as I received feedback and as I believe God directed, the focus shifted. Men and women can and do struggle, as patients or caregivers. Things that turn our lives upside down – 'curveballs' if you will, are not restricted to cancer."

A long-time marketing professional who is now a financial advisor at Kehoe Financial Advisors in Cincinnati, Larry started writing the book close to 18 months ago.

"I just started writing and Donna was my editor," he said. "It was great therapy for her, and a great time of bonding for us."

Larry subsequently hired a full time, professional editor and designer, and retained Winters Publishing in early 2017. "It became apparent this book was gaining traction. Donna has always had a great eye for words and punctuation, but she needed a break from looking at the manuscript," he joked.

The book can be read on its own or as part of a small group discussion. Either way, readers need not go through a curveball journey alone. "In the end, you will know that God is with you, step by step, helping you not only to survive, but to thrive," he said.

Five of the book's six chapters end with questions that can help the reader apply his or her thoughts to ideas shared in each chapter. The first three chapters encourage the reader to open God's Word and seek His perspective on the challenges being faced. One of the chapters provides practical tips on how humor and music are essential to coping. Chapter five and six guide the reader in developing a plan for moving forward - how to share one's story with others, the benefits of doing so, regardless of the circumstance, or outcome.

Donna has been an inspiration to him and so many other people, Larry admitted. She acknowledged that her journey has not been easy.

"I would not have chosen this path for ministry, but I have accepted it," Donna said. "God continues to place people in our paths, and we continue to see more blessings from what we give than what we receive."

"Donna and I are striving to share that adversity can be a catalyst for resiliency," Larry said. "You may feel unworthy or unusable, but get ready - God is about to do two things: He will use you and your story to help others, and then, somehow, you end up feeling better about yourself and your situation - amazed and humbled that God sees fit to use you. As an old Hindu proverb says: 'Help thy brother's boat across the river and lo! thine own has reached the shore.'"

"If you are doing what you were created to do, a joyful and resilient heart can still be manifested, even in the midst the deepest of difficulties and circumstances," he said.

For more information about "Staying Resilient," visit the www.thriverministries.com website or contact ThriverMinistriesOH@gmail.com.

Cost of the book is \$14.95. A portion of book sale profits will benefit Crossroads Church, BLOC Ministries and the UC Brain Tumor Center/Walk Ahead for the Cure event, which will be Sunday, Oct. 22.