

# Five-Year Cancer-Free Patients Celebrate Life

(NAPSA)—In a celebration of life, former patients who have been cancer free for five years were honored at Cancer Treatment Centers of America at Midwestern Regional Medical Center. At its Zion, Ill. flagship facility, more than 300 community members took part in a ceremony where 31 former CTCA patients planted an assortment of shade trees to honor their 5-year cancer-free status. The celebrations were dubbed “Celebrate Life.”

Participating in the event was Lynette Bisconti, a breast cancer patient who chose to have a child over radiation therapy.

When her cancer diagnosis and pregnancy came within weeks of each other, Lynette Bisconti chose the untraveled road. Determined to fight for the life of her unborn child, Bisconti spoke with dozens of medical experts, traveled to eight different hospitals, nearly miscarried, and risked her own life in order to ensure the future of her son. Nearly five years later, Bisconti credits the fractionated dose chemotherapy with saving her child as well as her own life.

Bisconti discovered that she was pregnant on Christmas day in 1997, after feeling unusually tired for months. When in for a routine pregnancy confirmation test, a lump in her breast was diagnosed as a benign cyst and immediately scheduled for removal. Because she was pregnant, Bisconti was awake when doctors discovered that the cyst was cancerous.

Bisconti's surgeon immediately told her and her husband that she must have an abortion, believing that the pregnancy hormones would fuel the cancer.

On a referral, Bisconti decided to visit CTCA at Midwestern Regional Medical Center. By this



**CELEBRATING LIFE**—Lynette Bisconti and her son took part in the opening “Celebrate Life” celebration. Bisconti, a breast cancer patient, chose to have a child over radiation therapy.

time, Bisconti had visited and decided not to be treated at seven different facilities. For the first time, Bisconti and her husband felt as if they were not treated as insane for wanting to keep their own child.

“The challenge in fighting cancer isn't killing off cancer cells. The fight is that the cancer cells continue to grow back. Using fractionated dosage, the time period between treatments is shortened, giving the cancer cells less time to grow back,” says Dr. Sybilann Williams, MD.

The fractionated dosing allowed Bisconti to go completely off of chemotherapy in order to ensure that the baby would grow. On August 31, 1998, Bisconti gave birth to a completely healthy baby boy of almost 6 pounds.

Also participating in the event was Lois Mischler, a caregiver to Lori Warchol, another five-year cancer survivor.

“The most difficult part of being a caregiver is facing the

idea that you may lose someone you love, and not having the luxury of time to deal with that possibility. Your focus is solely on that person and that fight,” said Lois.

When Lois sat down with Lori and the CTCA physicians, they talked about how both of them were going to survive this disease. This was a first for Lois and Lori.

“Because of the openness and understanding of the CTCA staff, I knew we weren't alone. For the first time I was offered and accepted support from the hospital staff. You need to remember to take care of yourself during this time,” she added.

“The reality was that most of my energy was focused on Lori, but I allowed time for myself if I needed it, so the focus was on Lori healing. My biggest challenge was not letting Lori know what I was going through.”

Celebrate Life is an annual event. For more information on CTCA, visit [www.cancercenter.com](http://www.cancercenter.com) or call 800-515-9602.