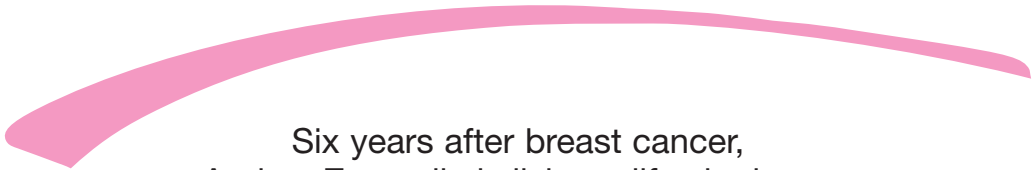


BY WENDY RUBICAM EVANS
PHOTOS BY ERIC BLACKMAN

One Face *of* Cancer



Six years after breast cancer,
Andrea Zampella is living a life she loves
and sharing her story of hope

When you sit down with Andrea Zampella, you know some things for sure right away. You know that she is drop-dead gorgeous, and is the picture of glowing good health and positive energy. When she speaks you know she's a funny, outspoken and slightly rebellious Jersey girl. What you wouldn't guess from meeting her is that she is a breast cancer survivor.

Zampella is a free-spirited glass artist who left New Jersey in the wake of September 11th, and eventually made her home in Scottsdale. She woke up one morning in September of 2004 with a painful lump in her left breast. She had been getting mammograms consistently since age 30, because her grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer in her 50s and did not survive.



Andrea Zampella says that her experience with breast cancer changed her for the better.

Going Into 'Survival Mode'

After finding the lump, she had a mammogram and was assured that the mass was only a lipoma (a benign fatty tumor). Since the lump continued to bother her, Zampella consulted with Dr. Christi Bourne and Dr. Shelley Nakamura, who agreed to remove it; and in December, she was diagnosed with lobular carcinoma—breast cancer. "It's like a freight train hits you, because you never, ever, ever think it's going to be you," she shares. "The first couple of days all you can do is cry. Everything is sucked right out of you. Everything's taken away from you, and then you're in survival mode."

Because of her family history and the fact that lobular cancer has a greater tendency to spread to the other breast, Zampella decided to proceed with a double mastectomy. In the month between her diagnosis and her surgery, she meditated, visualizing clean, cancer-free lymph nodes. As it turned out, her lymph nodes were cancer-free, and after her surgery, the biopsy report showed no cancer remaining. Doctors still recommended chemotherapy and continued treatment with medications like Tamoxifen and Arimidex.

Choosing her own Path

Zampella did a lot of reading and research, and in the end, went with her gut feeling that she didn't need further treatment. She admits it was a struggle. "The fear can really grip you" she says. "When you are under fear you give away your power to other people."

She explains that the fear can prevent you from educating yourself and tapping into all of the knowledge and resources available today. "Whatever your gut feeling is...this is your life, this is your story as you turn the pages," she continues. "So when you know what your gut feeling is, just find people—and it's not that hard—who are like-minded. Surround yourself with like-minded people and it's an easy path that way."

After her mastectomy, Zampella moved through the challenges of reconstructive surgery, which she admits was a long and painful process. She was grateful, though, for the excellent care she received from Dr. Shaun Parson and was very happy with her implants. "I'm healthy. I have these great boobs. They look great in clothes," she recalls thinking. But the other side of the coin was that the reconstruction really went unfinished for years because like many post-mastectomy women, she still had no nipples. She had two unsuccessful nipple procedures, and walked away from one attempt at pigmentation. "When I took off my clothes I looked like an alien because I just had these two bumps and they had nothing on them," she shares.

Fixing her 'Alien Boobs'

Zampella lived with her "alien boobs" for years until a friend gave her a brochure for Rachell Hall's Breasthetics clinic. Hall calls what she does the "forgotten final phase" of breast reconstruction, which is her signature treatment of post-mastectomy repigmentation—tattooing nipples where there are none. "Every woman who comes in and gets finished looks in the mirror and cries," Hall says. She explains that this final treatment allows them to feel like women again.

Zampella agrees, exclaiming, "It's like a work of art, and you can't believe the difference. I went from being an alien to being a sexy woman—like that!"

Need Help?

Here are Some Local Resources

Arizona Institute for Breast Health (www.aibh.org): Programs from prevention and education to specific treatment options, including a free second opinion for women diagnosed with cancer.

Rachell Hall Breasthetics & Bridging the Gap Foundation (www.breastcancer-beauty.com; 1.800.343.3223): Post mastectomy nipple/areola repigmentation.

The Breast Cancer Society, Inc. (TBCS) Hope Supply Program (contact Jodi or Laura at 480.284.4014): New items such as bedding, clothing, hygiene products and more, available free of charge to breast cancer patients.

Be You Be Well (www.beyoubewell.com): Breast Thermography Services—early detection of tumors and monitoring of breast anomalies.

Happily Ever After League (www.happilyeverafterleague.org): Supporting moms through cancer recovery with financial grants.

Tina's Treasures (480.323.1990): Virginia C. Piper Cancer Center, Scottsdale Healthcare Shea—specialty products and services for those battling cancer.

Alice Rae Intimate Apparel (www.alicerae.com; 1.800.678.3842): Offers help with post-mastectomy needs. By appointment only.

Bosom Buddies (www.bosombuddies-az.org): Support groups, education and a hotline for those dealing with breast cancer.

Her Outlook Now

Zampella maintains her positive outlook by doing what she loves, and insists that her experience with breast cancer has changed her for the better. "You really stop and you look, and everything's brighter. Look at my life. Look at how lucky I am," she says.

She is a yoga "addict," practicing daily, and embraces the spirit of yoga that encourages self-love and acceptance of others.

Although her husband, John, raises organic beef, Zampella eats a vegetarian diet, high in nutrients. "Your body is your responsibility, and even though I had the genetic link for [breast cancer], I can actively do something about it," she says.

She describes her outlook as putting herself in a win-win situation for her health. She treats herself once in a while to chocolate or the occasional drink, and avoids soy products because of soy's effect on estrogen levels.

Sharing her story

Although Zampella now lives a happy and healthy life, she acknowledges that breast cancer has left a lasting impression on her. "You're given this opportunity to see what you're made of. It will never go away. It's like a stamp—Breast Cancer," she shares. "I wouldn't want to ignore it because I meet so many incredible people now and talking about it changes people's lives."

She will share her story with anyone, and although she says she's not one to wear pink, she feels that being open about her experience is one way she can help other women. "I think just talking about it and putting it out there is the

healing process. And it's so simple, you know?"

Zampella has come to realize that although every breast cancer survivor's story is different, women pull together in the fight to make advancements in diagnosis and treatment of the disease. "Fifteen years ago they wouldn't even pay for reconstruction. It's the power of all of these women getting together to make it such an incredible experience," she says.

Zampella was thrilled to join other breast cancer survivors in modeling lingerie for the upcoming book, *Beauty Beyond Breast Cancer*, which will benefit the Bridging the Gap Foundation, led by Hall. Hall is committed to showing women what real women actually look like after breast cancer, knowing that it gives them hope. She is driven by the message shared with her by so many of the women she has worked with: "It's the day another survivor lifted up her shirt to show me what it looks like in the end that I thought, 'Okay, I can do this.'"

Wendy Rubicam Evans is a freelance writer and marketing consultant in Scottsdale. For more information visit www.rubicamwriting.com.



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