



Wuesthoff Health System will be giving The Shower Shirt to all women having mastectomies at their hospitals during the month of October.

## NECESSITY: THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR LISA CRITES TURNS HER EXPERIENCE INTO SOMETHING POSITIVE

Following her bilateral mastectomy in June of 2009, still groggy from surgery, Lisa Crites (October 2009 *SpaceCoast Living*) received some disappointing news from her surgeon. "When Dr. Diaz told me I couldn't take a shower until my drains were removed I started to cry. Little things become huge when you've had a mastectomy." The normal protocol for post surgical drain removal is two to three weeks, but for someone like Lisa who suffered complications from infection, it could be much longer. "I was not happy. I thought, here I am, I've just had my breasts cut off, I feel horrible, I'm thoroughly confused and I can't even take a shower?"

Once home she conducted extensive research to find any type of water resistant garment for showering that could accommodate her drains and found nothing. Working with family members, Lisa modified a beauty salon cape and the first **Showershirt™** was created. She admits it might not seem like a big deal but "when you feel better physically it just goes to reason that you'll feel better emotionally."

The yearlong odyssey that brought Lisa's invention to the marketplace included help from friends and family. From creating five prototypes, obtaining a patent, finding a manufacturer to navigating medical red tape, the experience has been educational. "I had no idea there were so many processes in getting medical devices approved and registered," says Lisa.



**The Shower Shirt** – Available exclusively at Wuesthoff Home Medical Equipment in Brevard County through 2010. Available nationwide starting in 2011. \$85 ■ [www.theshowershirt.com](http://www.theshowershirt.com)

Lisa and her Shower Shirt story will be featured on *Lifetime* Television October 20.

The Shower Shirt, on the market this month, has patent pending status and is registered as a Class 1 medical device by the FDA. Medicare has approved the shirt as reimbursable for breast cancer/mastectomy patients and Invacare/Level 2 is planning to distribute the shower shirt internationally.

"Although initially born from a personal need, I quickly realized that I wanted to make a difference for women going through this. I needed a project to focus on for my own mental state and this became my recovery project." She gave Melbourne Beach resident Mara Hixon a Shower Shirt prior to her breast cancer surgery this summer. "Lisa took a gloomy situation and turned it around into a sunny wonderful invention," says Mara. "She has my utmost admiration for what she did. The shower shirt let me lead a normal life while recuperating from surgery. After all, the better I feel, the faster I heal. Kudos to Lisa; she's created a phenomenal product."

"Over the last year, I've felt that something has been guiding me with this project," says Lisa. "I'm thrilled and elated at the positive response."