

Breast cancer survivor turns a negative experience into a hopeful solution

BY MARTHA MASIELLO

A diagnosis of breast cancer followed by a bilateral mastectomy resulted in a local woman's journey that was destined to help others.

Lisa Crites was told she couldn't shower until her surgical drains had been removed. This added to her frustrations.

"I was not happy," Crites said. "I'd just had my breasts cut off and felt horrible, and I couldn't take a shower."

After extensive research to find a water-resistant garment that would accommodate her drains, she found nothing. With the help of family members, Crites modified a beauty salon cape and created The Shower Shirt™.

"When you feel better physically, it stands to reason that you'll feel better emotionally," she said.

Following months of creating prototypes, obtaining a patent, getting through medical guidelines, and locating a manufacturer, the product became available in October 2010. The Class I medical device is registered with the FDA.

Crites is working with Medicare and insurance organizations for full reimbursement for all breast cancer mastectomy patients.

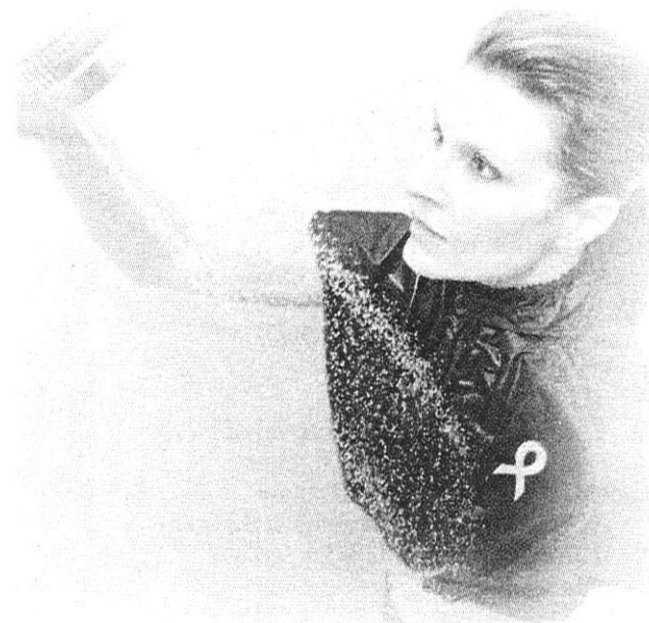
The Shower Shirt™ will be distributed internationally in 2011. Locally it is available at Wuesthoff Home Medical Equipment in Rockledge and online with the American Cancer Society. In addition, Health First Health Plans will be providing the product for all patient members who have breast cancer/mastectomy.

The Shower Shirt™ keeps incisions, drain portals and drain tubes/bulbs dry. Bathing or showering without this type of protection could increase the chance of post-surgical infection, as the tubes are a direct portal into the surgery site. The Shower Shirt™ pockets support the weight of the drains. Many breast surgery patients continue to use the product after the drains are removed to protect the surgical site which may remain sensitive. The Shower Shirt™ is designed for use after any breast surgery requiring drains including lumpectomy, mastectomy, reconstruction, breast reduction or augmentation.

During October, Crites shared her story with Lifetime Television and Fox News, and has been available locally to encourage and motivate other breast cancer victims.

"I felt something has guided me with this project. I'm elated at the positive response," she said.

For more information, visit theshowershirt.com. *SL*



SENIOR LIFE Photo by Shawn Johnson

Lisa Crites says she felt guided to create her patented Shower Shirt.