

Invention by MSU alumna, Lisa Crites, easing recovery trauma for women *Shower Shirt brings everyday comfort to breast cancer survivors*

Lisa Crites, 1989 graduate of Murray State University, never imagined her paper napkin sketch of a shower shirt 14 months ago would lead to a Lifetime Television appearance, meetings with the Susan G. Komen Association and a product that would help thousands of breast cancer mastectomy patients across the United States.

The 43-year-old breast cancer survivor from Brevard County, Fla., created the first FDA approved post-mastectomy garment that is used during showering to prevent post-surgical infections.

After her own double mastectomy in May 2009, Crites was surprised to find out that she had no way to shower prior to the removal of her surgical drains two or three weeks after the initial surgery. She decided to improvise, using a tightly-tied plastic bag to keep water from coming into contact with her incisions, reducing the opportunity for infection.

As she stood in the shower with her homemade medical device, Crites wondered why after 70 years of mastectomy surgeries in the U.S., something hadn't been created to provide protection. Crites called on her brother, Charles Crites, an architect and 1996 alumnus of MSU, to create a proper and official architectural drawing derived from her paper napkin sketch.

Crites's first prototype was made by her cousin who used a beauty salon cape to produce the first "Shower Shirt." Five prototypes later, Crites and her team of helpers created a product

she hopes every hospital in the country will eventually offer to all of its mastectomy patients.

The estimated retail cost for the Shower Shirt is \$85; however, the company is working with Medicare and private insurers for reimbursement for all breast cancer and mastectomy patients.

"My goal all along has been to make other women feel better after the physical trauma of having their breasts amputated," Crites said. "This is my small way of contributing and giving something back to other breast cancer survivors."

The Shower Shirt will be featured on the American Cancer Society's website within the next few weeks and will be published in their "TLC" retail catalog after the first of the year.

Crites also appeared on *The Balancing Act* on Lifetime Television on Oct. 20 to discuss the inspiration behind the creation of her product. "Lifetime's morning show, *The Balancing Act*, is for women and about women," Crites said. "Their goal is to focus on inspiring stories about women in hopes of helping others. During the segment, I really focused on what I had gone through as a breast cancer survivor and the idea of not only surviving, but thriving."

During the show, Crites said she also talked about how she came up with the product and why she wanted to create it for other women.

"Inventing the Shower Shirt was really a therapeutic process and it helped me survive," Crites said. "I went through four months of hyperbaric treatments, six surgeries and two infections in a matter of 14 months. Inventing this medical device was ... a way for me to not only heal but also make a difference."

Crites has teamed up with a breast cancer center in Dallas that would like to distribute the Shower Shirt to its 500 or so mastectomy patients each year and she is working on a number of other opportunities. She is partnering with a company in Ohio to eventually go worldwide with her product.

"I want every hospital in the U.S. to give mastectomy patients a recovery kit that includes the Shower Shirt because when I left the hospital I had no idea what to expect," Crites said. "In the U.S., 200,000 women have breast cancer and 56 percent of those women have mastectomies. I hope this product will make the recovery process easier so other patients won't have to go through the confusion and struggles that I experienced."



Lisa Crites (right) shares her story of creating the Shower Shirt for women who have had mastectomies because of breast cancer with Danielle Know, host of Lifetime Television's *The Balancing Act*.

More information about the Shower Shirt can be found on the website, www.theshowershirt.com.