

# Rockland, Westchester women share personal breast cancer journeys

**Karen Croke, Rockland/Westchester Journal News**

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## The art of survival

Carole Weaver was ready for her next chapter.

The 63-year-old from Sloatsburg had raised her kids, was winding down a career at a Catholic college and had started performing in community theater. Things were looking good. Weaver says she was hoping to perhaps land a small part in a Broadway show.

Then the phone rang: Her doctor told her she had breast cancer.

"I was sitting at my desk and picked up the phone and I remember the rolling chair beneath me caught on my long skirt," Weaver said. "The more I pulled, the tighter it became ...was I being drawn into hell?"



Breast Cancer survivor and author Carole Weaver is photographed at her home in Sloatsburg Sept. 25, 2018. Weaver's book is entitled "Side Effects: The Art of Surviving Cancer." (Photo: Carucha L. Meuse/The Journal News)

Her doctor told her the diagnosis was serious and Weaver quickly had a biopsy. She suffered through years of chemotherapy, multiple surgeries and painful side effects.

What brought her solace, she said, was art.

"I came to the meditative and reflective aspects of art because all the other regular sources weren't there," she said. "Some doctors were good, but other doctors had hurt me. My boyfriend went to medical school but couldn't stand being around sick people."

Her girlfriends were there for her, but Weaver said she needed more.

She began to reflect on the art in her home and felt an immediate impact.

"Discovering each item during a stage of treatment gave me comfort, a way of dealing with the pain, the fear, the trauma," she said.

Weaver has written a book about her cancer journey, "Side Effects: The Art of Surviving Cancer."

In it, she describes a dozen pieces of art and how each impacted her.

When she found a statue of Guanyin, the god of compassion, Weaver says she was introduced to a dual gendered power who "listens to humanity's ordeals and sends help. The surprising idea of a culture embracing, handling pain with a combination of sympathy and strength, wisdom and love, braced me for what was ahead."

Other works of art she details in her book distracted her from nausea, showed her endurance in the face of obstacles, and she says, "made me marvel at the insignificance of age in the face of dauntless talent."

Cancer, she says, pushed her into a different second act.

"Yes, it did, definitely. Cancer, and my response to it, pushed me into authoring the book and started my speaking career with the National Speakers Association."

Weaver has given 16 talks on art and healing. Her next one is Oct. 25 in Highland Falls.

Today, a decade after her own battle, Weaver is encouraged by the medical profession's embrace of more alternative approaches to cancer, including homeopathy, acupuncture, reiki, yoga and other mind-healing modalities used in tandem with traditional cancer therapy, which she says is essential for healing.

And, of course, the power of art.

"I speak about the biochemical, neurophysiological impact of art in my talks, from seniors who, after looking at the Grand Canyon, show a definite increase of good cytokines in their blood, thus boosting their immune systems, art and music demonstrably returns our bodies to a balanced state, changes our chemistry for the good, and lifts — even temporarily — out of sadness and loss," Weaver says.

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"That true flicker of joy or wonder is precious, and indeed, a medicine of its own."

**Find her book:** [www.caroleweaverlinsner.com](http://www.caroleweaverlinsner.com)