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Glitzy fundraiser comes with message about breast health 🚗

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Karen Willis Duerden holds a photo of her daughter, Debbie Duerden McDonald, who died of breast cancer two weeks ago. Duerden hopes to carry on her daughter's message. (Daily News/Mike Dembick)

Breast cancer touches everyone in different ways, and women from across the spectrum will be attending tonight's Titz 'N' Glitz fundraiser for the deadly disease.

Karen Willis Duerden lost her daughter Debbie Duerden McDonald to breast cancer Oct. 11.

Marjie Gray is a 53-year-old survivor of breast cancer who endured a double mastectomy.

Both women are looking forward to FanTiTZy, this year's event that will raise funds to assist breast cancer survivors with the incidental expenses of dealing with cancer - expenses such as child care, drugs not covered by insurance, groceries or taxi fare.

Duerden said the loss of her daughter is still so new, it doesn't seem real.

"It's really tough; it still hasn't fully sunk in," she said.

But she wants to attend the event to support women who have gone through what her daughter did.

Education

McDonald made headlines when she was diagnosed with a rare form of the disease - inflammatory breast cancer - and decided to speak out and educate women about breast health.

In 2006, she was a guest speaker at Titz 'N' Glitz and spoke about the rapid progression of her disease, encouraging

women to be more aware of their bodies and to look for *any* changes in their breasts, not just lumps.

Inflammatory breast cancer often presents with swelling and redness of the breast, rather than the typical lump.

Duerden hopes to carry forward her daughter's message to women: "If you find anything that's different, see somebody about it."

Gray would also like to send a message for women to take care of themselves.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer in April 2006, after her annual mammogram that she almost missed.

"Something inside me just said, 'No, you've gone every year since you were 40,'" she said.

"Thank heavens I did, because if I didn't go, my diagnosis wouldn't be very good."

That summer, Gray's left breast was removed and a year later, the right.

"So I'm boobless," she said.

But her journey allowed her to pass on the message of breast health to other women in her life, including her mother, her daughter, her friends and now just about any woman she meets.

Titz 'N' Glitz takes place at the Halifax Marriot Harbourfront Hotel. Tickets can be purchased for \$50 ahead of time, or at the door.

The fundraiser - which is a women-only event started by Margo Kerr in 1995 that has raised more than \$700,000 since it began - will include cocktails, munchies, the comedy of Cathy Jones, personal stories and a parade of costumes. It is expected to attract more than 700 women.

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