



## Gwen Goss does not let cancer stop her from running

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Gwen Goss, shown here in Norma's Garden at the Gathering Place East in Beachwood, continues to run on a regular basis

BEECHWOOD - The hospital had a tough time identifying just what was causing Goss' chest pain. With no history in her family, the doctors were nearly certain it was not cancer but, instead, a fungus she may have breathed in while running in a recent ultra marathon.

After a month without treatment, in order to prevent the aggravation of symptoms, the doctors performed a biopsy on her lung. The results showed cancer, and it was not good.

Goss was diagnosed with a rare type of lung cancer that is in both of her lungs. It is untreatable and, inevitably, terminal.

She lost everything in a matter of days. Working as a health administrator when diagnosed, she lost her job after the disease and treatment made her unable to return to work.

"Working in health care, it was amazing to me that I couldn't get fixed," she said.

As she began to struggle with her diagnosis, she was told she should go to The Gathering Place.

"Everyone told me I had to go to The Gathering Place, and the support group there has really taught me how to cope with all of this," Goss said. "It really saved me; I needed to talk to people."

The Gathering Place helps people dealing with all types of cancer. There are support groups for patients as well as families and friends who have all been touched by a loved one's disease. Regardless of age or gender, it offers support groups and classes dealing with subjects such as nutrition and exercise.

Goss attends a support group for those who are terminally ill. While everyone in the group has one very serious thing in common, laughter is something that keeps the patients resilient.

"There are a group of us that have to laugh and make jokes about what we are going through because otherwise we would be so depressed," Goss said. "I have to laugh every day — I just have to."

For example, Goss said she went to buy patio furniture after being diagnosed.

"The salesman said it was guaranteed 20 years and I started laughing," she said. "You just have to laugh at those things."

While her illness is serious and rare, it has not stopped her from doing what she loves to do: run. Goss, even while continuing to go through maintenance chemotherapy, continues to get out and exercise.

From speaking with other people and doctors, Gwen has learned those who regularly exercise tend to out live the prognosis they are given by their doctors.

"The next time I run a race I want to get a shirt that says, 'If you can read the back of my T-shirt in this race, what's your excuse?' — because if I can do it, anyone can," Goss said.

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