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## Fighting Spirit by Jordan Bartell

According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 182,460 new cases of invasive breast cancer will occur in women in 2008. This year, 40,480 women will die from breast cancer. Among men, this year, 1,990 will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and 450 will die. It doesn't have to be this way. October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Maryland will host the Race for the Cure Sunday in Hunt Valley. More than 20,000 will participate, with a goal of raising \$4 million. That money will go to research grants and other programs that provide services such as transportation to doctor appointments, diagnostic testing and a range of follow-up programs. At last week's fundraiser Steps to the Cure in Baltimore, breast cancer survivors, some of whom were diagnosed just years earlier, strutted down the catwalk as models. Three of those women told us their stories of being diagnosed at young ages. They are stories of pain, of hope, of lessons learned. They are stories you will remember.



**Maimah Karmo** 35, *Aldie, Va.*

I was diagnosed with breast cancer on Feb. 28, 2006 at 4:45 p.m. I was consumed by fear, but most of all I was terrified of leaving my then 3-year-old daughter without a mother. I soon realized I needed to make a personal difference in the world.

While going through my second round of chemotherapy, I founded Tigerlily Foundation, which is dedicated to educating and providing hands-on assistance to young women affected by breast cancer. We provide chemo buddies, financial support, empowerment and home services, such as grocery and meal delivery.

Perhaps cancer touched my life for a reason. I learned while going through treatment to be grateful for still being alive. Through cancer, I realized that there were millions of people I could impact. It wasn't solely about MY cancer or MY experience; it was about a larger purpose. I embraced the things in me that were broken so that I could be healed and help create healing for others.

I am actually happier and more fulfilled now after cancer than before; and I've lived more in the two years during and after breast cancer than in the 32 years before.