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Tigerlily Foundation: Helping Young Women Beat Breast Cancer

Kristin Fisher ■ 3 months ago

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WASHINGTON, DC (WUSA) - Every year, about 11,000 women under the age of forty are diagnosed with breast cancer, and 10% die from the disease because they're either misdiagnosed or they're told they're too young to get breast cancer. That's almost what happened to Maimah Karmo.

Karmo was only 32-years-old when she discovered a lump in her breast while taking a shower.

"I went to my doctor and she told me that you can't have breast cancer. You're too young. Women who are your age don't get breast cancer," said Karmo.

But Karmo did have breast cancer. By the time she went back to her doctor six-months later, the lump had doubled in size.

"Gripped with fear was an understatement. I sat there shaking and I thought I was going to pass out. My daughter was the first and foremost thing in my mind. I couldn't leave her," said Karmo.

To make matters worse, Karmo's fiancé walked out in the middle of her treatment.

"There was a time when I was just so devastated by the diagnosis and I was just so alone. And not knowing another woman who had had breast cancer at my age, I didn't know where to go to for support," said Karmo. "I think in that lonely place is where I found god and found Tigerlily."

The Tigerlily Foundation is Karmo's self-proclaimed other baby. She founded the organization during her second round of chemo. Three years later, she's filling the swag bags for their first fundraising gala.

"We're there for young women between the ages of 15 and 40 to educate them, to advocate for them, and to provide hands on support before, during, and after breast cancer," said Karmo. "We're going to tell them, hey if you need help right now, we have buddies for you, we can help you pay your bills, we can provide you with home cleaning. We're the place to come to help young women breathe."

As for Karmo, she's now in remission and on a mission to help other young women beat breast cancer.

"I am better than I was before. I feel healthier, I feel happier, I feel more purposeful," said Karmo.

The Tigerlily Foundation's Annual Gala will take place on October 22, 2009 from 7 - 10 PM at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington, D.C. WUSA9's Andrea Roane will be the Mistress of Ceremonies. If you would like to attend the gala or learn more about the Tigerlily Foundation, go to

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www.tigerlilyfoundation.org.

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