

# Cancer survivor develops healing balm

BY PHIL FOLEY  
STAFF WRITER

## Cancer. The Big C.

For most people the mere mention draws a cold chill, but for Joan Wysocki the experience was life-altering in an oddly positive way.

The retired CPA from Novi said she's always loved plants and has had a vegetable garden

ever since she was a little girl, but it wasn't until after she was diagnosed with breast cancer near two years ago that she became interested in the medicinal value of herbs.

"I never felt a thing until I felt the lump," she recalled. She said the worst part was when she told Ronald, her husband of 17 years, "The look on his face was just fear," she said quietly.

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After being diagnosed in June of 2001, Wysocki endured two lumpectomies and a mastectomy. "The tumor was a lot bigger than they thought," she recalled.

This was followed by six months of chemotherapy at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor and six weeks of radiation therapy at

Providence Hospital and Medical Centers' Assarian Cancer Center in Novi.

"Although I wasn't thrilled about the cancer treatments," she said, "they did help me to focus on a new purpose. For that I am very grateful."

While undergoing treatment, Wysocki began reading Susan Woods' "Breast Cancer? Breast Health! The Wise Woman's

Way." She had also begun studying herbs through the Clayton College of Natural Health in Birmingham, Ala., three years ago.

Wysocki said the cancer treatments "gave me an excellent opportunity to try out various things on myself."

## HERBS HELPED

Through the radiation treatments, which lasted from April to May, Wysocki said "I took a lot of herbs and they made a huge difference."

The radiation treatments left her with burns similar to sunburn, and the doctors at the Assarian Cancer Center recommended aloe vera gel, but Wysocki decided there must be something better. She ended up making a salve of olive oil, beeswax and herbs.

"If I felt better doing something for myself," she said.

To cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil, Wysocki added St. John's Wort, Comfrey, Plantain, Chickweed and Calendula, which left to steep for two weeks on her windowsill before being added to melted bees' wax to form a salve.

St. John's Wort, said Wysocki, along with being an anti-bacterial and anti-viral agent and a pain reliever, turns the mixture a bright red. She said the allantoin in Comfrey and Plantain helps regenerate cells, while Plantain and Chickweed are anti-inflammatories. Wysocki added Calendula "is a good overall skin healer."

Wysocki said she liked the way the salve relieved the discomfort of the radiation treatments, but was even more pleased that, unlike commercial skin creams, it contained no chemicals.

Not long after she made her first batch, she shared some with an acquaintance who had seen 10 doctors for her psoriasis without success. The salve, said Wysocki, cleared it up.

Wysocki had been going to Spiritual Reflections at the Village Mall in Farmington Hills for meditation and massage weekly. The owners there eventually suggested she set up a booth at the Farmington Founders Festival in July.

From there, she said, "Things just bloomed."

## ONE-WOMAN COMPANY

The salve is now packaged in one ounce jars that sell for \$9.95 as Herb Ease. She also created a salve for poison ivy called Ivy Ease, a lip balm called NaturaLips and a soap version of Herb Ease.

This has led to the creation of a one-woman company that carries her original product's name. Wysocki raises the herbs for Herb Ease on 30 acres she and her husband own near Hillsdale, and she makes her products in her Novi kitchen.

Last summer, at the urging of her physical therapist, Wysocki joined her cousin on the Avon 3-Day Breast Cancer Walk from Ann Arbor to Farmington Hills. After getting donations from family and friends for the walk, Wysocki decided to donate a portion of Herb Ease's profits to cancer research.

So far, Wysocki said, reaction to her product line has been "excellent."

For more information on Herb Ease, Wysocki can be reached by phone at (248) 210-4133 or by e-mail at herbease@aol.com.

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With her double-boiler nearby, Novi's Joan Wysocki shows how she makes her HerbEase body creams from bottles of cold-pressed olive oil, St. John's Wort, and Calendula oil. Wysocki developed the "Nature's body salve" after undergoing cancer treatment.

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