

# Who Rescued Who: Can a Big White Dog help her new mom conquer stage four breast cancer?

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## Staff Reports

It was a day like any other when Becky came out of the store. A slight misstep getting into the car caused an instant pain in her back. "That wasn't really unusual since I'd had a long history of back issues" Becky told me. "I just figured it would be better in the morning if I took it easy the rest of the day."

Fast forward through a trip to the emergency room, pain meds to no avail and eventually some x-rays and an MRI. Five days after the stumble, Becky found herself being admitted to the hospital in, of all places, the cancer ward.

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*Becky Baker, Author*

"I went from thinking I'd tweaked my back again, to hearing those dreaded words: you have cancer. Wow. What a reality check."

The next few hours and days were a blur, from pain management to a biopsy to an ill-timed "quality of life" talk. After being given an expiration date of about three months, Becky entered the world of cancer treatment, with surgery,

radiation and chemo the only options.

When Becky declined to accept the advice of the oncologist to begin chemo, it took everyone, including herself, by surprise. "It just didn't feel right," said Becky. "I am usually the kind of person who does whatever I'm told, but this time was different. I'd been to the fancy pods where they administer the chemo. The surroundings were beautiful and the staff was incredible, but the faces of the patients left me very unsettled. If I indeed had only a few months to live, I didn't want to live it like that."

Luckily, Becky had a very strong advocate by her side. Her husband, Rick, would do anything and everything to help her conquer this beast of a disease. While keeping up with the full time job of



caring for Becky, he immersed himself in the research of any and all treatments available.

Rick found a seemingly endless list of products and protocols claiming to help, cure or prevent cancer. Not wanting to discourage others from exploring all options, he declined to list ones he discounted outright or chose to look into, but together, Rick and Becky have come up with what they hope is their winning formula.

They have condensed the main points into a three-pronged approach.

#### Prayer -

“We have had such an incredible number of people offering up prayers for us. We can definitely feel the Peace that only Faith and Grace can provide. We not only ask for His healing touch, but for His divine guidance in our battle.”

#### Diet –

A recurring theme that Rick found in his search for answers involved diet. “What we consume, I hesitate to use the term food, has a huge impact on our well-being. The Standard American Diet (SAD) is just that – sad! Between the diminishing nutrients and minerals in our fruits and vegetables combined with the increased use of herbicides and pesticides; the hormones, antibiotics and grain being fed to our livestock; the extensive use of GMO’s; not to mention the sugar, flour and additives that are so prevalent in our diet, it’s no wonder people are getting sick.”

“We adopted a mainly organic diet. Lots of vegetables and fruits, much less animal protein, very little added sugar, and no, I repeat, no artificial sweeteners. This was a big one for me since I was quite addicted to Diet Coke.”

#### Positive Thinking –

“Keeping a positive outlook and reducing stress were a big part of what we strove to do. Rick always downplayed what the medical doctors had told me, since God is the only one who knows when anyone’s time on this earth is up. I chose to never believe the three-month sentence I had been given. We laughed a lot, even when what we really wanted to do was cry. And, I tried to engage in things that gave me joy. That’s where the dogs, and Miss Penny in particular, came into play.

“I have always been an animal lover and with dogs in particular, we just seem to be on the same wavelength. We currently have four canine companions and they all have their own distinct personality and method of helping me. It’s hard for me to look into those big brown eyes and not feel love and hope.”

The two newest members of the Baker household are rescues. Becky and Rick came across Carolina Great Pyrenees Rescue when they were looking for a new addition, having lost Grace, the matriarch of their furry family. Penny, a four-month old Great Pyrenees who had been rescued from the street, seemed like a perfect fit. She proved to be such a character that Becky decided it was time to share her story with others.

“I had already started creating in my mind a series of books about Miss Penny. We would start with her being rescued by a wonderful organization, finding a new home and meeting her new family. After that, we added Charlie, a Pyr/husky mix puppy who had been born at CGPR. This led me to my next

topic of having a new sibling brought into the family, which older children can also relate to.”

That’s when the series took a turn that no one had seen coming. Becky was diagnosed with stage-4 breast cancer that had metastasized to the bones, mainly in her spine and pelvis. The change in the household was abrupt and far-reaching. Not only was mom gone for several days, but, when she got home, she was different. She could barely move, having to rely on Rick and a walker to get from the bed to the recliner and back again. No more sitting on the floor dishing out and soaking up the affection with the kiddos. No more walking through the property in search of squirrels to chase. Not even a meal fixed by mom.

While all the dogs were very attentive and concerned, this change seemed to affect Penny more than the rest. She became Becky’s fulltime guardian. She stayed by her side assessing every visitor with a wary eye and was always the first to notice if Becky needed assistance. “It was a complete transformation for Penny. Prior to that, she was very self-centered and didn’t seem as eager to be part of the family. I think she had trust issues from being on the street. She still does after all this time.”

The next chapter for Miss Penny had begun to take shape. Becky would tell about how an illness can affect the rest of the family. She would also like to incorporate some of the things that have helped her in her battle with cancer. “Penny loves to help, and I use the term loosely, when I plant things. I will show her keeping watch over my garden and making sure that the pesky rabbits don’t eat the greens that I need for my daily salads. There will also be a lot of bonding, pet therapy if you will, between Penny and myself.”

Aside from the books, Becky and Penny will have a website and Facebook page where they can share some of their experiences. There will be lots of information here, including recipes for healthy food, words of encouragement, and links to sites that Becky feels are helpful in her fight.

“I’m not here to tell anyone what to do or not do. Everyone has to figure that out for themselves. My best advice to everyone, even those, or maybe especially those, who do not have cancer, would be to change your lifestyle now. Look at the food you eat and try to make it the best fuel possible for your body. Assess the chemicals you ingest, apply to your skin, or come in contact with on a regular basis and try to avoid as many as possible. Take time for yourself. Stress is not a good thing for any of us. Set aside a few minutes, even if it’s in the car on your daily commute, to reflect on what really matters in your life, to meditate, or to pray. Sit quietly and pet your dog for a few minutes to calm your mind. And, even in this time of turmoil, be joyful, give thanks, and make sure you laugh every day.”

Becky and Rick are currently looking for a location where people can go to learn about, and experience firsthand, some alternatives available for healthier living. “We haven’t come up with the right term for the center we envision. It’s not a wellness center, or a retreat, or a new age crystal cathedral of what’s happening now. We just want to introduce people to some different things that they may have heard or read about but, for whatever reason, haven’t wanted to try. Things as simple as massage therapy, nutrition education, or chatting with an herbalist. This place has to have a certain feel to it. We want people to be able to enjoy a peaceful setting where they can relax, feel safe and secure, and get in touch with nature again.”

The first book in the Miss Penny Series was released in February of this year. “A Lucky Penny,” is available at Amazon and other fine book sellers.

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