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Local Voices

Ridgefield Attorney Helps Women During Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Lawyer wants women to know what they need in a legal sense should they find themselves diagnosed with the disease that impacts 1 in 8 women.

By Wendy Ann Mitchell, Patch Contributor | Oct 16, 2017 1:52 pm ET

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RIDGEFIELD, CT —Pink socks, pink ribbons and "Think Pink" events are popping up all over. October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease, and one local attorney wants women to know what they may need, in a legal sense, should they find themselves diagnosed with the disease that impacts one in eight women.

According to [BreastCancer.org](#), as of March 2017, there were more than 3.1 million women with a history of breast cancer in the U.S. The website states that about 85 percent of breast cancers occur in women who have no family history of breast cancer, and that the most significant [risk factors](#) for breast cancer are simply being a woman and growing older.

So how can you be prepared if you find yourself facing this battle? According to [John Sweeney, a Ridgefield attorney](#), one must have their affairs in order so as not to burden loved ones with the difficult task of decision making if they find themselves unable to do so themselves.

John Sweeney said that one woman who was recently diagnosed contacted his firm, [Sweeney Legal](#), after her diagnosis. He said that his client, an active wife and mother of two young children, included one with special needs.

"She had a lot on her plate and she was overwhelmed," Sweeney said. "Although she was optimistic, she came to Sweeney Legal to get her financial and legal affairs in order."

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"Breast cancer is difficult on everyone, including the patient and the family. It is always best to hope for the best and plan for the worst," Sweeney said. "Make sure your affairs are in order to reduce stress and ensure that your family is taken care of."

"My first order of business was to help remain positive. We worked through her affairs, gave her the assurances she needed, and answered a lot of her questions. In the end, we built a flexible, thorough plan and put all the necessary documents in place."

In addition to a Will, Sweeney set up a Healthcare Proxy and Power of Attorney. According to [Cancer.org](#), "people who are unable to manage their daily affairs because of impaired thinking or emotional problems might still be able to understand the medical situation and make their wishes known. They should be given information in a way they can understand, and asked what they want to do.

In the event that you become unable to take in information and make your wishes known, another person may be asked to take part in the process of informed consent."

The organization states that the only way a patient can choose the person to make these decisions for the patient is to set up a Durable Power of Attorney for health care, also called a Healthcare Proxy. For more on Health Care Powers of Attorney, see information on [Cancer.org's website](#) regarding [Advance Directives](#).

"My client wanted to be sure that the right people would be making her healthcare and financial decisions if she could not. We included a special needs trust for her special needs child and made sure he was provided for. We updated her beneficiaries on her bank, stock, and retirement accounts and made sure everything was in place before she began her treatment," Sweeney said.

While this story has a happy ending and his client is now cancer free, the battle was not easy.

"Thankfully, Sweeney Legal was able to ease some of the stress of the situation which helped put her mind at ease and reduce her stress, enabling her to focus on her treatment and recovery."

For more information about Last Will and Testaments, Revocable Trusts, Powers of Attorney, Healthcare Proxies, and more, visit [LegalSweeney.com](#), contact John Sweeney at (203) 261-6877, or email sweeneylegal@gmail.com.

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