

Meet Susan Beausang

A Life-Calling of Fashion that Comforts.



Some of Susan Beausang's earliest memories involve breast cancer. Her grandmother, aunt, and mother all had the disease. During Susan's childhood the routine procedure for breast cancer was a radical mastectomy, so she saw and understood firsthand how this diagnosis and the resulting treatment altered a woman's life.

Her sister was diagnosed at just 29 years of age, so Susan knew there was a good chance she too would end up with breast cancer.

Another sister's diagnosis came when it was possible to obtain genetic testing. As she had suspected, Susan has the BRAC2 gene. "Initially I had my ovaries removed," says Beausang, "I scheduled a double mastectomy for six weeks after that, but sort of chickened out when I got an infection from my first surgery. I waited another year and a half, during which time I had a series of biopsies and MRIs. Finally, after one of the biopsies I had between my oophorectomy and my bi-lateral mastectomy, I thought why did I wait? When the biopsy came back negative, I had both of my breasts removed—and I never looked back!"

"My initial mastectomy surgery didn't go well. I was talked into getting silicone implants. Six or seven months later I began developing rashes, and my hair started falling out. Although I had the silicone implants removed, I developed Alopecia. In just three months I was completely bald."

"I found it ironic that I'd done everything possible to avoid chemotherapy and the resulting baldness, and I ended up having to deal with one of my fears anyway! Being faced with this sudden and unexpected appearance change was a difficult emotional adjustment. We live in an appearance driven culture. Baldness is a physical mark of illness, so people react differently to you."

Susan decided she had to find a positive outcome. "After my initial period of adjustment, I began to explore the options for women who experience medical hair loss. My first reaction was to try and duplicate my hair by wearing a wig. While wigs may be a suitable solution for some women, I found them to be uncomfortable and hot. I wanted to wear something that was fashionable and comfortable, so I designed the BeauBeau™ as a stylish and comfortable alternative to wearing a wig."

Says Beausang, "I lost my hair but not my sense of self. Alopecia handed me an opportunity to help other women cope with their loss of hair in a dignified and stylish manner. I've talked to so many women who say their biggest fear is losing their hair. Unless you've walked down the road of having no hair, eyelashes, and eyebrows, you can't fully appreciate just how traumatic this is! I think doctors need to spend more time addressing this very emotional issue. Personally I feel grateful that at the end of the day, I can always say I've made a positive difference in someone else's life!" ■