

Wellness Members,

My trip was a real honor and pleasure. I flew into Washington on Monday and arrived at the beautiful Renaissance Mayflower hotel near the White House. I spent a nice quiet night having an early dinner, meeting delegates from Wisconsin and Oregon in the wine bar and going to bed early to be ready for the next full day of training. On Tuesday I met 12 remarkable, dedicated, and compassionate delegates from SC. Everyone of us except one survivors who went on to develop websites, foundations, serve on boards or as directors of foundations working everyday to make survivorship easier than it was for us. The remaining delegate was the sweetest oncology nurse we nicknamed Bubbles for her sparkling personality. We trained for our meetings on Capitol Hill and how to get our message across. Lance Armstrong arrived in the afternoon for a pep talk and then we broke into strategy sessions for Wednesday. That night Lance hosted a reception for the delegates at the ESPN Zone. It was a lot of fun. We were each given a \$20 card to play video games. After dinner six of us sat around talking over a glass of wine. We were getting ready to head out and since we had no intention of playing games we gave the Wisconsin delegate who's family with 2 kids was with her all our cards. They got \$120 to play the next day while we hit the hill. That felt really nice.

The LAF wanted all 12 of us to visit our two senators while we broke up into districts for the Representatives. We made up a very intelligent strong-willed group and coming to a strategy consensus was not easy. Everyone wants to tell his or her story and we were trained to get our message out first and repeat at the end. That was the most important thing besides reminding them we are their constituents. There were also two very defiant strong-minded women who felt not enough attention was paid to their causes--brain cancer and ovarian cancer and actually trashed the pink ribbon people. They presented a negative self-serving presentation and that was a tight line to walk. I was incredibly glad all I wore that day was one pink wristband. We made one the chairperson so she felt she had control. Having advocated on Capitol Hill before I knew our time was very limited and I did not feel strongly about my story---just the message that prevention is actually cheaper for the insurance companies and education about risks is imperative. We finally came up with a script whereas Bubbles would introduce us as a group of constituents who are or care for survivors. She would present what we wanted: 6.7% increase in the NIH and NCI budget, a \$137,000 increase in the CDC budget, and the co-sponsorship of a bill being presented that day called the Prevention, Diagnosis & Treatment Act which guarantees everyone regardless of insurance status cancer care from prevention to end of life treatment. Then we selected two people to tell their stories and then another to summarize, thank and request their support for these issues.

The meetings went very well. We met with the chief of staff for each senator since they were on

the floor working on the immigration and Iraq War Support bills. The staffers listened and were positive about their support for our requests. Lindsey's Graham's staffer gave us enough time for everyone to tell his or her story, which was fantastic. In summation I added that every delegate at the table was not only a survivor but also advocated, educated, and supported survivors every day since we were diagnosed. I was really proud to be there and inspired and impressed with the delegates I had made friends with the day before. After that all 200 delegates reported to the Senate Park for our media exposure. We all wore dress clothes and it was a typical hot and humid Washington Day. We had to put our yellow T-shirts over our dress clothes because we had a mandatory strategy session starting at 7:30 AM and had to check out of our hotels and check our bags before we left. We were herded onto choir stands shoulder to shoulder. That took about 30 minutes to make sure they could see everyone's face. Then Lance came out with the four senators who were sponsoring our bill and they all made speeches. We were dying. It was so hot windy and humid. By the time everyone got the shots they wanted we had been standing there for over an hour and a half. I then was taken by the cabby to the wrong hotel, had to take another cab to the right hotel, changed in the restroom, took the wrong metro three times and had a 45 minute delay in Charlotte for mechanical reasons and to allow some passengers to make their connection. I had had about enough of people by then and just wanted to read my magazine in peace. It turns out the young 19 year old next to me had other ideas. He was a recruit heading to Parris Island and so wired and excited he talked the entire way to Savannah. I kept trying to tell him he would need his sleep but he was wired. I arrived home at 1:00 AM having to go all around town because a barge carrying a crane hit one of the two bridges to my island. Washington was an honor and empowering but it was great to be home.

We hope to deliver 50 Survivor's Resource Notebooks to the cancer center this week all provided for free from LAF.

I hope all of you a well and looked forward to this long Memorial Weekend.  
Have fun and be safe.

My best in whole wellness,  
Karen Patterson, Founder of Womens-Wellness.com and a breast cancer survivor