

THE ENERGY TO LEAD

EXECUTIVE AND BREAST CANCER PATIENT MAKES PARTNERSHIPS PRIORITY

Medtronic

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Suzanne Foster believes in her company's Mission to "alleviate pain, restore health and extend life." And for her, it's personal. Suzanne is Vice President and General Manager for Medtronic's Advanced Energy division, which makes electrosurgical products that aid in procedures including orthopaedic, spinal, plastic/reconstructive, ENT applications and surgical oncology.

In January 2015, at 44, the wife and mother of two went in for a routine mammogram. A follow-up, 3-D mammogram detected breast cancer. No family history. No symptoms. "When the radiologist told me, I didn't say a word. The first thing I did was text Beth," Foster said. She had been introduced to Dr. Beth DuPree, a surgical oncologist, nearly two years earlier when DuPree was chosen as Advanced Energy's 2013 Surgeon of the Year. "Since then, we had worked together to strategize and think about how we can improve breast cancer treatment for patients," Foster explained. "I knew enough about Beth's work – and her commitment to patient outcomes – that I wanted her to be my doctor and partner through this journey."



Suzanne Foster, center, is VP and GM for Medtronic Advanced Energy. Pictured with her is her oncologist, Dr. Beth DuPree (right), and plastic surgeon, Dr. William Scarlett (left).

Dr. DuPree performed a bilateral mastectomy on Suzanne a few weeks later. During the procedure, she used the Medtronic [PEAK PlasmaBlade](#), a precision dissection instrument commonly used in nipple sparing mastectomies, which DuPree says are becoming more and more prevalent among breast cancer patients. "As physicians, we must strive to put the 'care' back in healthcare," she explains. "When I have a post-op patient in my office, tearing up because when they stand in front of the mirror they look and feel like themselves again – that's powerful motivation to keep doing what we're doing."

Foster agrees. "Every day, as partners in healthcare, we have to ask ourselves the question: With this new technology, are we really advancing the standard of care for patients?" It's part of being a leader, she explains. "It's our responsibility – as a company, and as individuals – to have a vision, engage other perspectives, and bring the best solutions forward on behalf of our patients, partners, and customers." In the last two years, Medtronic – in conjunction with surgeons like DuPree – has trained nearly 600 physicians on the advancements in surgical technology and techniques to treat breast cancer.

Leadership is something Foster is known for – by people in her company and partners like Dr. DuPree. “Suzanne is a role model for me,” DuPree said. “Her team respects her for the transparency she shows and her ability to connect with them.” A day after her diagnosis, Foster sent an email to her entire staff of more than 400 employees to share the news and her plans for treatment. Within hours, she had hundreds of reply emails from co-workers extending their support. “The people at Medtronic put their arms around me and really helped carry me through the experience,” she explains.

Foster, in addition to her day job with Medtronic, is a member of the Global Leadership Team for the Medtronic Women’s Network. She regularly speaks at Women’s Network events as well as to external groups about women in business and leadership. “This experience has made me much more insightful and committed to truly being present,” she said. “It might mean being late to a meeting once in a while, but it’s worth it if it means I took the time to connect with someone.”

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Throughout the month, Medtronic Advanced Energy is branding its surgical devices pink and donating to the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade.

This therapy is not for everyone. Please consult your physician. A prescription is required. To learn more about the Peak PlasmaBlade and the risks associated with use of this device, [click here](#).



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