

## Stories from Long Island

*By Alicja Barahona*

I was ready for my run. I had done all of the proper training and had purchased the appropriate clothing. I was wearing a pink hat with a photo of Roberta and several other names that I received from supporters who wanted to dedicate my run to their loved ones. The weather was perfect, sunny and 60 °F. My crew was ready; I had two friends driving a car with food and drinks to supply me during my run. Yes, we were prepared ... or so I thought. We were not ready for the many touching stories of the victims of this terrible disease that we encountered during my run. We were moved to tears, and we hugged each other often. Each story included a "thank you for doing this," and each story included a hope for a cure that will come one day. Stories like meeting a young woman (about 30 years old) at the stoplight who commented on my pink hat. After telling her about my journey across Long Island, she told me, trembling "I have a lump in my breast. Thank you for doing this." She was holding her little daughter's hand. Stories like a woman who approached us because she saw all of the pink colors on me and my support crew. She said "Thank you for doing this; my daughter died from breast cancer. She was 36." A man driving a security SUV stopped to ask if we were OK, when I had stopped to rest for a few minutes on the shoulder of the road. After learning about the run, he asked how he could donate because his wife is currently undergoing the breast cancer treatment; he thanked us for doing this. There are more stories like these told to us as I ran the 120 miles over a 29-hour timeframe; stopping every 5 miles for a snack and drink. I didn't sleep and continued my journey overnight. At one point, a policeman stopped his cruiser to check out the "strange car with flashing lights on the side of the road with and four people dressed in pink" well after midnight. After learning of this run and told us: "My sister has breast cancer. Thank you for doing this."

I remember the poem that was read at my co-worker's memorial. It started "at every turning of my life I came across good friends", and that is so true. You have friends. And all the others included on my pink hat have good friends and loved ones. One day we will succeed, one day cancer will be gone forever!