

Sentara Martha Jefferson

SUMMER 2017

magazine

In Good Hands

Sentara Martha Jefferson
Orthopedic Specialists
Heal Hand Troubles

PLUS: Copper Linens Fight Infections

Tips to Help Women Get Better Sleep | New Treatment Helps Save Stroke Patients

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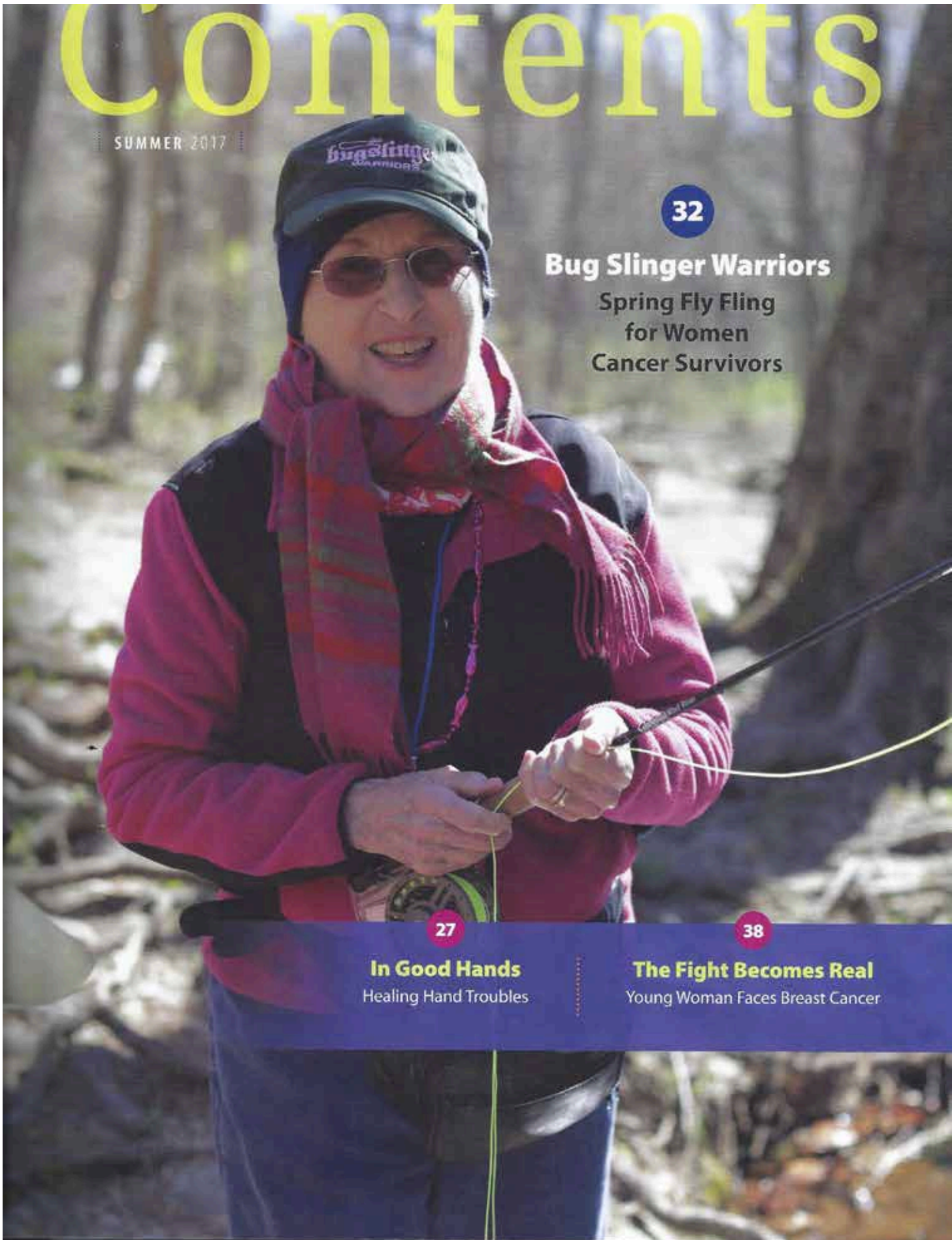
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The Fight Becomes Real

Young Woman Faces Breast Cancer



A woman wearing a green cap, sunglasses, a purple headband, a pink and purple striped scarf, and a pink jacket is smiling and looking to the right. She is wearing a black fanny pack. The background is a blurred wooded area with sunlight filtering through the trees.

BUG SLINGER WARRIORS



WOMEN CANCER SURVIVORS FIND RESPITE, SUPPORT AND HOPE AT ANNUAL SPRING FLY FLING

JEANNE BEELER was still undergoing daily radiation treatments for stage 3 breast cancer at Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital when she took a break in early April to head out to the Spring Fly Fling, an annual weekend-long fly-fishing retreat for women who have been or are being treated for cancer.

Beeler was one of 10 women who had been convinced by Janelle Gorski, a nurse navigator for the cancer center, that a weekend spent fly-fishing, trekking through the woods, sleeping in rustic cabins and connecting with other cancer patients would be good for them. Though Beeler agreed to attend, her expectations were somewhat guarded.

"I liked the idea of not having to cook for a few days and just sort of getting away and focusing on me a little bit," Beeler recalls. "To be honest, though, I wasn't sure I wanted to spend that much time being around a bunch of women I didn't know who might be singing the woes about cancer."

As it turned out, Beeler couldn't have been more surprised.

"The weekend was just awesome—life-changing, actually," she admits, choking back tears. During the retreat, she danced the Virginia reel, caught a rainbow trout, learned to make hand-tied artificial flies, received a few massages and enjoyed gourmet meals. Most importantly, though, she made instant and meaningful connections with her fellow "Bug Slinger™ Warriors," as the retreat-goers are known.

"All those women—every single one of them—understood exactly



THE FIRST SPRING FLY FLING WAS HELD IN APRIL 2007, AND THE RETREAT HAS BEEN ANNUAL EVENT EVER SINCE THEN.

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how I was feeling about what I had gone through and was still going through with cancer. I didn't have to explain it to anybody and I didn't have to justify it, because they just knew," says Beeler, who works as events and application manager in the Admissions Office at the Darden School. "So even though we didn't realize it beforehand, we all agreed that this was exactly what our souls needed to continue healing."

SPAWNING A SISTERHOOD

The Spring Fly Fling is the brainchild of Mark Andrews, founder and executive director of Therapeutic Adventures Inc., a Charlottesville nonprofit that educates, challenges and inspires people with all types of disabilities by providing access to a variety of outdoor activities. In the mid-2000s, the organization started holding adaptive fly-fishing camps for disabled veterans and other groups, and Andrews realized that he wanted to do something similar for women who had gone through cancer treatment.

"I just thought it would be a great opportunity for women who had spent so much time dealing with appointments and needles and clinical settings to get away for a little 'me

time,'" Andrews says. "I also wanted them to be able to connect with other women who had been down a similar path with cancer, and then learn a little bit about something new: fly-fishing."

Andrews worked with Faye Satterly, administrative director of cancer and palliative services at Sentara Martha Jefferson, to get the program under way, pull together funding and recruit participants. He booked the lodge and several cabins at Montfair Resort Farm, an elegant-rustic getaway in Crozet with walking trails and a lake. And his good friend, James "Chubby" Damron, president of the local Thomas Jefferson Chapter of Trout Unlimited, brought in volunteer adaptive fly-fishing guides, along with the necessary equipment.

The first Spring Fly Fling was held in April 2007, and the retreat has been annual event ever since then. More than 140 participants are now permanent members of "this unique sisterhood," Andrews notes. Nearly 50 volunteers—including massage therapists, naturalists, chefs, yoga instructors and retreat alumni—provide support for the weekend's activities, and a number of local businesses donate coffee, wine, food and other supplies. Each year the gathering has been fully funded by the Sentara Martha Jefferson Women's Committee, Therapeutic Adventures Inc., Thomas Jefferson Trout Unlimited and Montfair Resort Farm, as well as through other grants and business donations.



"The Spring Fly Fling was a weekend of love, joy and compassion, and I just feel like each one of us was treated with great care and made to feel very special as individuals," explains Charlene Frazier, who attended this year's event after being diagnosed with breast cancer in August 2016. "I've been to a lot of retreats, but I've never been to one with such a genuine, personal feel. It was remarkable."

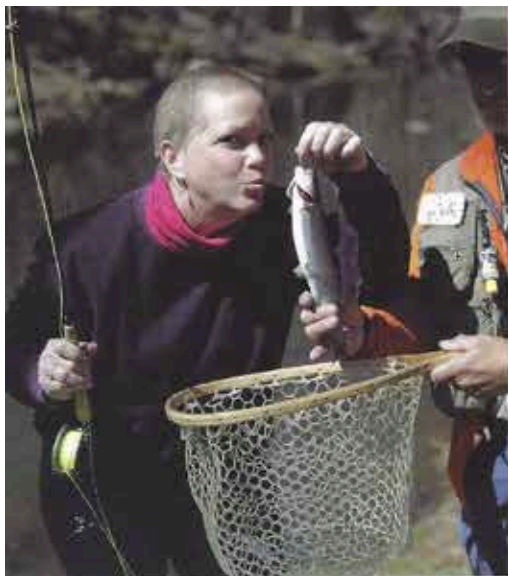
Although the event is designed to be therapeutic, it's not based on a medical model—and that may be why it works so well, according to Gorski. "The women come there to relax and try something new—and, of course, they wind up talking about cancer," she says. "But that's not the focus. It's not like: 'Let's all get in a circle and share.' It's really just allowing community to develop through this experience, and in an environment of support that Mark is really good at creating. It's pretty powerful."

GET THE NET!

Of course, the weekend also offers lots of fun and enjoyable activities, so participants can unwind and not have to think about cancer. On Friday night of this year's gathering, for example, retreat-goers enjoyed a bluegrass and classic country band. They also had opportunities to go on guided wildflower walks, do some kayaking, take a stretching and yoga class, or just go off alone and read a book. "We were very busy, but it was never like we had to do anything specific," says Frazier. "Whatever we felt like doing was fine."

On top of the various activities, participants receive a great deal of pampering during the weekend. On Saturday, for example, retreat alumni come back to serve lunch to their new "sisters," and dinner is a formal, full-service gourmet meal, complete with wine and dessert. Participants also receive roses, a Circle of Courage pin, a colorful fish charm necklace, and hats and shirts displaying their newfound status as "Bug Slinger Warriors."

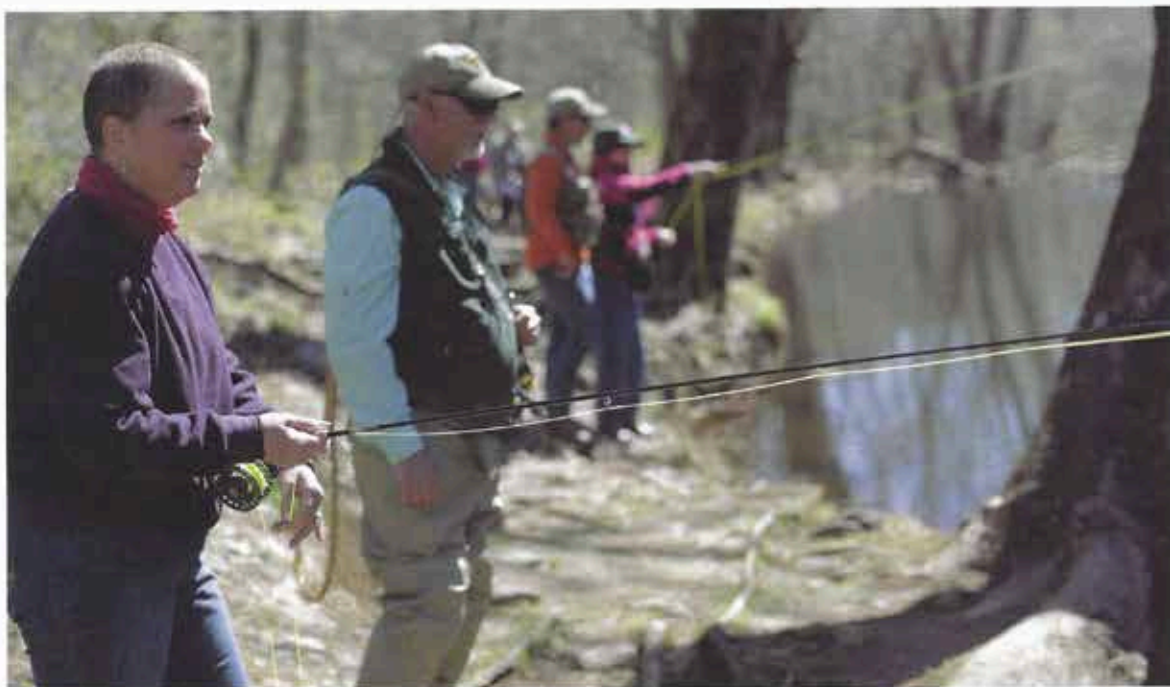
Fly-Fishing, not surprisingly, forms the core of the weekend's activities. Andrews says that this particular pursuit offers participants numerous physical and psychological benefits, but it's also a perfect metaphor for the cancer battle they've all gone through.



"You see this beautiful fish in the water; and you catch it and it struggles and it battles and it puts up a fight, until the point where it's pretty fatigued," he explains. "But then you revive it and release it back into the water, where it can continue to grow and thrive. Likewise, after a long, difficult struggle with cancer, the women get revived while they're here, and then they can move on and continue to live life that way it's supposed to be lived—to the fullest."

Casting practice starts early on Saturday at the nearby Moormans River Trout Management Area. The women then break out into two groups: One group goes out with a guide to fish, while the other group learns about why and how fly-fishing attempts to "match the hatch," or imitate the feeding cycle that happens naturally on the river. The second group also learns how to tie artificial imitations of some of the area's aquatic insects. Later, the groups switch.

For Beeler, the chance to go fly-fishing brought back warm childhood memories of time spent with her father, but it also gave her the opportunity to make new memories. "I cast my line out and started pulling it, and all of the sudden the 'big one' hit," she recounts excitedly. "I felt like I had a whale on the end of my line. Then I started yelling to my guide: 'Get the net! Get the net!'"





Ready to Match the Hatch?



The next Spring Fly Fling women's fly-fishing retreat will be held at Montfair Resort Farm in Crozet during the weekend of **April 6-8, 2018**. If you're interested in attending—or know a woman who might be a good fit—please call Janelle Gorski at 434-654-8401 or send her an email at jbgorski@sentara.com.

To be eligible, participants must have been diagnosed with any type of cancer, have undergone (or are nearing the end of) treatment, and be medically up to the rigors of walking and spending time in the woods. The retreat is limited to 12 women. Priority is given to those survivors who have received treatment at Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital. However, if any slots are still open, those who received cancer care elsewhere are welcome to attend. Participation is free.

She then pulled out a “beautiful, stunning, absolutely spectacular” 2-1/2 pound rainbow trout. After patiently posing with Beeler for some photos, the fish leaped out of the guide's hands and back into the water. “It was a monster,” Beeler insists. “I have witnesses!”

Frazier, a grandmother who retired after a long career in health-care education and advocacy, saw the opportunity to fly-fish as one more challenge to overcome. “The first line I cast, the fellow helping me said: ‘Perfect!’ Then it was all downhill for the next two hours,” she laughs. “I couldn't remember to keep the tip down. I forgot to pull the line in. I was a total klutz.”

But then, on her final cast, Frazier hooked a trout. “Amazing!” she states. “Mission accomplished!”

A month later, the women got together again for a potluck dinner, where they were able to catch up, reminisce and view all the pictures taken during the weekend. And next year, all of them hope to return to the retreat as volunteers.

“I'm still on a high from the weekend,” says Frazier, who proudly wears her “Bug Slinger Warrior” hat and continues to regale her family and friends with stories of her adventures.

“I made all these new friends, and we were just treated so special,” she continues. “And it just really warms my heart and spirit to know that complete strangers would care that much—and go to those lengths—for a group of women. It's overwhelming, refreshing, humbling and so, so awesome.”