



From left: Kathy Boston, founder of Kathy's Care Cards; Debbie Crall, director of jewelry division; and artist Janet Waggoner.

John Knouff

# Making A Difference

## ONE CARD AT A TIME

**Kathy's Care Cards** connect people with awareness and humor; help create a special dialogue between loved ones

**Y**ou're battling cancer or some life-changing disorder. You have a support system that doesn't know what to say, so it says nothing. It starts to back away because of that. You start to feel isolated because of this disease and your loved ones are withdrawing.

"The worst thing we can do for our friends and family is to say nothing when they're battling a life-altering event," said Kathy Boston, founder of Kathy's Care Cards of Westerville. "That creates more isolation and it creates more distance. Our cards represent not only what's appropriate, but they also represent what's credible to the people receiving the card."

"Kathy's Care Cards is giving you an ave-

nue because we've worked with these people that have been through this, and they have helped us say what they want to hear."

People who have experienced life's most difficult challenges write Kathy's Care Cards.

"They want to help other people through the same journey," Boston said. "The way this happens is we work with focus groups of men, women and survivors that help us. Kathy's Care Cards is an avenue for them to have a voice."

The biggest thing is the card doesn't say "get well soon," said Debbie Crall, director of jewelry division for Kathy's Care Cards. "It says 'we know what you're going through.' "

Kathy's Care Cards extends well beyond the greeting cards that marked its inception

in 2003. Today, the company also creates reminder cards for health screenings, books, calendars and awareness jewelry. Kathy's Care Cards are not just for terminally ill patients. The messages also are about coping, supporting, encouraging as well as humor because "statistically, humor works," Boston said.

"We are the first greeting-card company that promotes wellness through our products," Boston said. "They state words that haven't been said before such as depression, cancer, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's."

Boston is not like most entrepreneurs. She wasn't a businesswoman; she was a caregiver with a dream, but she also had a purpose.

"I started the company because I listened," Boston said. "And it's not just listening, you have to act on it."

Boston saw how men struggled with the women in their lives who were diagnosed with cancer. That's where the idea for the 2007 *The Men Behind The Women Battling Cancer* calendar originated.

"Men are often the caregivers," Boston said. "They don't have a support system necessarily to talk to about their wives or their sisters. The calendar tells about how much these men have been supportive to these women but also how much these women have impacted their lives."

### HEARTS THAT CONTINUE TO GIVE

Children have created a way into the hearts of loved ones suffering from diseases with a line called Kathy's Kids Care Cards.

"The original purpose was for us to have an avenue for kids to give to other kids and for parents to give to their children," Boston said. "We worked with Westerville Genoa Middle School."

One student created a skin cancer reminder card featuring a Dalmatian in memory of a teacher she lost to melanoma.

These children are talented and wanted to give something back because they had people in their lives affected by cancer, Boston said.

### Heart of Nursing Foundation

Kathy Boston understands how nurses will touch every person's life at some time. Kathy's Care Cards has established the Heart of Nursing Foundation, offering scholarships and grants to individuals pursuing the caring profession of nursing. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of Kathy's Care Cards is designated to this foundation, and the Web site also accepts donations for this foundation. A board of survivors and health-care providers selects the recipients of scholarships and grants.

### AWARENESS THROUGH HUMOR

The company expanded in 2005 with a product line dealing with awareness for screenings because screenings can save lives, Boston said.

"I was approached about two years ago by a task force in Delaware County that saw high incidents of men and women in their county dying of late-stage colorectal cancer," Boston said. "They were asking for my input to create a product that would encourage men to have cancer screenings for colorectal cancer. So I brought in humor, and they loved it."

For example, one poster featuring a cruise ship and a cocktail reads: "Cruise through your colonoscopy! Talk to your doctor about getting the test! Bottoms Up!"

In September, the company launched a new product line strictly for the military. This past April, Col. Daniel R. Kirkpatrick from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base asked Boston for help with awareness posters. Through collaboration, a different avenue was taken, Boston said.

"We asked them about creating cards for the military because nobody had ever done that," Boston said. "They wanted humor and they wanted inspiration, but they also wanted to acknowledge their service. So they became our focus group for these military lines. The military didn't have a voice; we are now their voice."



courtesy of Kathy's Care Cards

**Inside: I cannot image the pain your Cancer treatment has brought you. I wish I were able to take it away. Every day and every night I hold you close to my heart and offer you Strength, Comfort and Endless Love.**



courtesy of Kathy's Care Cards

Boston believes Kathy's Care Cards will be a nationally known company in five years.

"Our cards are in states from California to Connecticut," Boston said. "We are in CVS pharmacies. The cards are in the pharmacy section where people go to pick up their medications for what our cards represent."

Kathy's Care Cards doesn't have a marketing budget. Boston said the card line and company have grown by word of mouth, by media exposure and by need.

Sitting at the dining room table in her Westerville home, Boston gazed at a collection of care cards, awareness jewelry and pamphlets. With tear-stained



courtesy of Kathy's Care Cards

**Inside: Thank you for serving your country with courage and commitment and your patients with compassion.**

eyes, she looked up and said: "You know why people are drawn to Kathy's Care Cards Company? Because the company isn't about Kathy, it's about a community, it's about a community of givers."

For more information, or to purchase products, visit [www.KathysCareCards.com](http://www.KathysCareCards.com).

**Jennie Hardenbrook** is a senior magazine journalism student at Kent State University.