

As the 2013 Boston 3-day Closing Ceremony drew to a close, I continued to take in the joy and energy of the moment. As I looked around, I could see the many different expressions on the walkers, which ranged from total exultation as they realized what they had accomplished, to the look of joy, mixed with the toll that the 60 miles had taken on their body.

I saw the amazing crew, a group who provided our basic needs of food and hydration, support at camp and encouragement throughout the walk. Finally, my eyes were drawn to the center of the closing area, where survivors continued to savor the moment with fellow survivors and those coming to thank them for their courage, focus and determination to find a cure for breast cancer.

My thoughts then turned inward, as I thought about the Boston 3-day, my three years of participation in this event and how I was going to dearly miss it. Since walking all 3-day cities in 2011, I have treasured many aspects of each city, with each having special facets that I will never forget.

But Boston differs from all other 3-day cities for me, due to a special moment on Belmont Hill in 2011, a moment that allowed me to realize the full impact and meaning of the 3-day community as I progressed beyond that moment. As my walks continued from Boston 2011 through the remainder of 2011 and continued forward to this Closing Ceremony, I saw a community whose strength is in the love it shows to so many. I saw a community who will not let a stranger, alone in their struggles with breast cancer, remain a stranger, remain alone, but will surround them with pink love and do all they can to help.

I saw a community surround a “little girl with tears streaming down her face holding a sign that stated, ‘My Mom Died from Breast Cancer – Keep Walking for a Cure’” and provide this little girl on Belmont Hill, along with her sisters, with hope. I saw this community reach out in so many ways, providing these girls with basic needs, with birthday and Christmas gifts, with a grave marker for their mom. The love this community showed was never ending, never questioning, simply there, ready to give again to help improve these sister’s lives.

To know this community is to know that as one, we can move mountains or simply change the lives of others in a positive, impactful way. This is why Boston is so special for me. It is where I not only learned about a special community, but also where I learned a lot more about myself.

As my thoughts continued to recall all the blessings I received from meeting the “little girl on Belmont Hill”, they were quickly interrupted as Zoie found me in the crowd and jumped into my arms and gave me a hug that I wished would never end! The pure joy of knowing how far she has come in those two short years, as evidenced by the two photos, brought tears to my eyes and warmth to my heart. As a community, never doubt your impact on the lives of those you touch, with Zoie and her sisters being one example.

My lifelong and grateful thanks to all of you, for all you have done for Zoie and her sisters. You have help change their lives in a positive way. You have given them hope. The view from Belmont Hill has never looked better.