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Star of the Month

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Star of the Month

Each month, we will feature a new *Star* - someone who has provided outstanding support and friendship during a the cancer experience. Even on the darkest of days - these *Stars* shone bright!



Dave Balch
Twin Peaks, CA

Honored by Christine Balch

Dave Balch has scheduled and accompanied his wife Christine to over 240 appointments since she was diagnosed with breast cancer in April 2002. He has driven over 26,000 miles between their ranch in the San Bernadino Mountains to chemotherapy, radiation, surgical and general doctors' visits in the Los Angeles area. When Christine was diagnosed, Dave told her, "It's your job to get better, and it's my job to do everything else." And that's exactly what he's done. Not only does he handle the doctors' visits, he takes care of a small ranch with two horses, two dogs, two cats, and a parrot that Christine has had since 1957! Her cancer seems to rear its ugly head every two years with the first metastasis in the form of tumors throughout her skeleton and on her liver 18 months after she thought her treatment was over. One year later she learned she had nine brain tumors. This was the third time she was bald, and Dave continued to tell her how beautiful she looked without hair. Dave's support never falters and he has been there for her every second of every day. "The truth is that if it weren't for Dave, I would be a wreck because he handles everything: I just have to show up," says Christine. "He never complains about all the things he has to do; he just does them and I never see the stress he is under. I recently discovered that in the beginning he would go to his home office and cry when he knew I wouldn't be able to hear him." Currently, Dave participates in one of The Wellness Community's weekly online support groups for caregivers. All groups are free, password-protected and led by trained professionals in 90 minute sessions of 8-10 people. Members receive and share ongoing

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support, feedback, and information with other people affected by cancer. "It was helpful when I was down, and it was also helpful when I wasn't down because I was able to help the others in the group that were down," says Dave. In 2003, Dave wrote "Cancer for Two," a funny, touching book about cancer caregiving. The Balch's friends, however, call it a love story. In 2004, Dave founded The Patient/Partner project (www.ThePPP.org) to help other caregivers support their loved ones. People can also receive monthly caregiver newsletters. Dave is currently traveling around the country speaking to medical professionals, patients and their caregivers. His greatest piece of advice he shares with his audiences—"find things to laugh about."



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