

D U X B U R Y

REPORTER

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Hope blooms in Duxbury

BY BRITTANY BURROWS

Patti Armstrong prefers to refer to cancer in the past tense.

On July 16, Armstrong sat in the mild weather and watched as volunteers from the organization Hope in Bloom turned her grassy backyard into a lush garden of colorful flowers.

Two years ago this month Armstrong was diagnosed with breast cancer. After months of chemotherapy, a mastectomy, as well as radiation therapy, Armstrong is certain cancer has not gotten the best of her.

After seeing a newspaper article, Armstrong's sister Jane contacted Hope in Bloom to inquire about setting up an outdoor garden to help her sister with her fight.

Hope in Bloom is a non-profit organization that plants indoor and outdoor gardens in the homes and yards of men and women diagnosed with breast cancer. Roberta Hershon founded Hope in Bloom after her friend of nearly 50 years, Beverly Eisenberg, died from breast cancer in 2005. While in treatment, "I used to bring her flowers and make sure her garden looked great," Hershon said. Keeping her garden healthy and alive let Eisenberg "focus on trying to get better."

Inspired by her late friend, Hershon created Hope in Bloom to spread the joy and healing qualities of gardens to other people fighting breast cancer. Gardens provide an escape for patients in their

own home, a place of calm away from hospitals that can make them "much more receptive to treatment," Hershon said.

In the organization's short history Hershon and volunteers have planned 65 indoor and outdoor gardens all over Massachusetts.

In Armstrong's garden, Hershon, three volunteers, and two interns planted a vast arrangement of flowers including daylilies, black-eye susans, hyssop, and many other colorful plants. Designers, who volunteer their time for the cause, create each garden specifically for its recipient. Flowers are chosen that would most compliment each other as well as ones that are easy to take care of Hershon said.

One of the volunteers helping plant Armstrong's garden was Duxbury resident Claudia Doerre who got involved with the group recently through the community garden club. "It is so wonderful to be able to provide this for someone who is sick," Doerre said. As a frequent gardener who keeps up her own garden "I know what joy it can give," she said. Though her first garden with Hope in Bloom was right around the corner Doerre is enthusiastic about helping plant other local gardens in the future.

As her dog Nelly happily greets volunteers Armstrong awaits the completion of her new garden, looking forward to sitting on her deck in the summer air watching it grow.



Hope in Bloom volunteer Maddy Gold enjoys the aroma of phlox ready for planting in Patti Armstrong's garden.



Hope in Bloom founder Roberta Hershon lays out the garden in Patti Armstrong's yard.



**Hope in Bloom
T-shirt.**



**Volunteer
Lori Waldman.**



**Roberta Hershon, Patti Armstrong
and Nellie in front. Left to right:
Maddy Gold, Lori Waldman, Louise
Kelly, Claudia Doerre, Greer
Underwood.**



**Patti Armstrong
watches as volunteer
Claudia Doerre plants
flowers.**



**Hope in Bloom garden
recipient Patti Armstrong.**