Emma Muniz's breast cancer journey began with a closed door, then took her to Italy and finally to ABCD. “I was shocked when I found out. I retreated to my house, closed the door, pulled the drapes and hibernated,” Emma said. “I was so angry. I’d lost my husband to cancer in 1996 and my children had to suffer through that. Now seven years later, it was happening again.”

A staunch Catholic, Emma turned to her faith for strength. She made a spiritual pilgrimage to Italy, where a Mass was said for her in Siena. She calls it a physical healing journey. “I believe in the power of prayer, and I felt surrounded by love—from all my family and friends. It opened doors and showed me how to go through.”

Emma found ABCD by searching the Internet. “I went to a support group but it wasn’t for me,” she said. ABCD matched Emma with Joan von Sternberg, who also had lost her husband. “Joan is the most wonderful person, and we formed up like sisters,” Emma said “Before, I was ready to give up,” she said. “I don’t think I’d be here today if I hadn’t called.”

After her treatment, Emma decided to become an ABCD Mentor. It’s a way to help someone the way ABCD helped her and comforts her as she continues her own journey. “The sisterhood of ABCD is wonderful,” Emma said. At an ABCD event for Mentors and participants, Emma raised her hand and asked the some 200 survivors to call out their years since diagnosis. The responses were remarkable: 15, 18, 22, even 30 years!

“It was so encouraging to all of us to hear,” Emma recalled. “You have to believe that you can get the help you need to go on. For me, it was God and ABCD. Breast cancer will be a hard journey, but it’s not a closed door.”