Sheboygan, Wisconsin, native Mary Illgen was aware of ABCD because of Melodie Wilson’s work as a journalist and media stories about its services, but she called because of her doctor’s encouragement.

“My doctor’s office was terrific. They gave me a packet of information about services for breast cancer patients, but they specifically brought ABCD to my attention,” she notes.

Mary did not contact ABCD right away. She had to work up the motivation to call. “I like to handle things on my own,” she notes. Besides, she was busy. Mary has always been active in her community and was proudly watching her daughter grow into young womanhood. Her husband was supportive and breast cancer just wasn’t something she expected.

But then Mary had to make choices about surgery and had to learn about coping with radiation, drug treatments and fatigue. She realized that having a supportive husband was not the point; she knew, “it was really important to talk to someone who had gone through the same thing.”

Mary recalls, “I felt personally supported from the moment I called ABCD. The person who spoke with me was calm and focused and made the match quickly.”

Kathleen Congleton, Mary’s mentor, could understand Mary’s situation perfectly. When diagnosed, she was busy with a new career. Her husband was “the researcher, the on-line person,” Kathleen recalls. “This was helpful, but scary. I really needed support from someone who had these surgeries and had these drugs in her body,” she adds.

Today, Mary and Kathleen are friends, enjoying their good health and their mutual interests in music and theatre. They’ve socialized together and Kathleen is encouraging Mary to train as a mentor when she is ready. Mary agrees about the value of ABCD’s one-to-one support, because mentoring is “just for you.”

ABCD provides free, personalized support for those affected by breast cancer.