Rosie Davis had made up her mind to refuse the second course of chemotherapy that her oncologist recommended after her mastectomy. Until she met Mary Tunson. Mary, a retired nurse and 12-year breast cancer survivor, helped Rosie understand why more chemotherapy was important and reassured her about going through the treatment.

“It helped so much because Mary walked in these same shoes,” Rosie said. “She explained things in ways I could understand and gave me information that nobody else did. I don’t know what I would’ve done without her.”

“Rosie was crying when I called her,” Mary said. “I tried to reassure her, and I told her it had been 12 years for me.”

A founding member of the ABCD board of directors, Mary has formally mentored four women, but she’s talked with thousands through ABCD’s Mentor Outreach and Education (MORE) program. She’s devoted much of her five years with ABCD to reaching women—especially those who are medically underserved—with information about breast health and breast cancer, speaking at health fairs, luncheons, church meetings, breakfasts and community events.

“MORE is so important because it reaches women who don’t have breast cancer, so if they do get it, they’re not so frightened. They’re better able to deal with it,” Mary said. “People I meet are always so amazed that they’re talking to someone who had breast cancer—I seem so normal.”

Her match with Rosie was Mary’s third pairing through ABCD. “Working with people through ABCD energizes me physically and spiritually,” Mary said. “It’s what I need to do as part of my keeping well.”

In the end, what Mary does to keep herself well helped Rosie Davis, too. Rosie had the second course of chemotherapy.

“I tell people I did it because I talked to a beautiful lady who’d been through it,” Rosie said. “She showed me it’s not the end of the world. And now I’d love to be a Mentor for ABCD, so I can help someone else out the way Mary helped me.”

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

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Rosie Davis
with her mentor Mary Tunson