

The environment has always been special to Chris Brick, a hydrogeologist and water quality specialist. Chris is a woman who knows metals and arsenic and what they do to water—and how to restore a healthy environment to water that has been tainted with them.

So when she found a lump in her breast when she was 48 years old, Chris took that same approach. Find out what's wrong and figure out how to make it right.

The lump turned out to be breast cancer.

She read articles on the Internet trying to make sense of her diagnosis. When she read what cancer survivors said about their disease, she didn't make sense of it.

**Being lucky.**

**Not taking things for granted.**

**Deciding what is important and what isn't.**

After a lumpectomy, chemo, radiation and hormone therapy, she gets it.

She was treated through coordinated care through women's health providers at St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center and the physicians at Montana Cancer Center.

"I haven't made any changes in my life. I still have the same job, like to do the same things. The changes are mental," she says.

There were hard times—sometimes Chris was bedridden she was so ill. One of her friends also had breast cancer, and it helped to talk on the phone with her about treatments, tumor pathologies. But they really wanted to act normal with each other—talk about mutual friends, discuss their lives, pretend they didn't have cancer.

But because of technological advances and time, they knew that Chris could beat breast cancer and her friend wouldn't. How it seemed so unfair.

And there was a time when she didn't want to talk to people, and her friends let her be. But as soon as she was ready, her friends rallied around her, giving her a pointed Vietnamese hat with plastic fruit. Her friend who was bald gave her tips on grooming when she had no hair.

And even people who she didn't necessarily call "friends" rallied around her. Her work sometimes puts her up against people who see the environment and the rivers in an opposite situation from her. During one of the meetings, one of those opponents took her aside and said "Here, I want you to have this. I have been thinking about you," and placed an angel token in her hand.

Cancer doesn't care what side of the river you are on.

And now, two years out, Chris is cancer free, and on the anniversary of her ?, she and her friends celebrate by drinking champagne.

"I understand now what the cancer patients on the Internet meant. I appreciate so much more about life. I don't take so much for granted, and understand the value of things in life. I am incredibly lucky"