

Local woman designs gowns for radiation patients



11 HOURS AGO • [JENNIFER HUFFMAN](#) 8-27-12

On Dec. 31, 2010, Maria Lucas, then 50, was diagnosed with Stage 1 breast cancer.

After two surgeries in early 2011, the Napa woman began radiation treatments at the Queen of the Valley Cancer Center, where the staff created a warm, welcoming environment, Lucas recalled.

“Every day I would walk in and my mood would rise,” Lucas said, adding she was warmly greeted by smiles and the smell of fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies.

However, there was one part of the process she did not appreciate — wearing the standard-issue hospital gown.

A cotton hospital gown might not seem like a big deal when it comes to battling cancer, but to Lucas, it represented everything she did not want to be.

“Putting on that hospital gown was the one part of the entire process that made me feel sick, because at that moment I looked sick,” she wrote on her website. “My personality was taken away. I was uncomfortable, cold and embarrassed.”

Lucas knew there had to be a better alternative. And that’s how the Radiant Wrap was born.

One Friday, with permission of the staff, Lucas took home a handful of gowns, cut them up and sewed her version of a hospital gown for radiation treatments.

The wrap she designed looks like a loose, thigh-length blouse with a sash to secure the gown at the hips. It's made out of a silky polyester fabric and does not use Velcro, zippers, buttons or extraneous ties, Lucas said.

Offering easy access to the back and chest area during exams, the Radiant Wrap met all of the requirements for treatment, "but at the same time made me look and feel beautiful," she said.

The custom-made gown was a hit, Lucas said. "I wore it and everyone said, 'Wow.'"

Staff and doctors took note. So did Koray Lucas, Maria's son.

"I said, 'This is brilliant. I think we can take this great idea and make it a great business together,'" said Koray, 23, who was about to graduate from an entrepreneurial program at San Francisco State.

Mother and son began working on a prototype, finding fabric, finding a manufacturer and building a website. Originally the duo planned to sell the wrap directly to customers via the Internet, but then they shifted their business plan to sell directly to cancer centers.

Today, six cancer centers or hospitals in Northern California have purchased almost 300 of the gowns, including Queen of the Valley. The centers typically give the gowns to women in a "new patient" bag, Lucas said. Radiant Wraps can also be purchased online for \$59 each.

Eking out a small profit that has been reinvested into making more gowns, the Lucas's are on their third manufacturing run with an Oakland firm, having produced about 550.

For now, the mother-son team is working out of Lucas' living room. For Lucas, "this is about giving back," not making money, she said.

Koray Lucas said he has a vision for the fledging enterprise. "I see the business growing to huge potential," he said.

His goal for the company? "To have a Radiant Wrap in every woman's hand undergoing radiation treatment in the country."

"I'm so proud of him," Lucas said of her son. "The greatest thing is the sensitivity and awareness" about women and breast cancer, she said. "How many 23-year-old guys really know anything about breast cancer?"

"I'm doing something worth doing," Koray said. "It's hard for me to understand the challenges of going through breast cancer, but it makes me feel good I can help ever so slightly."