NEWS RELEASE

#NonstopFight: 10 Questions with Maureen Smith

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Thousands of our team members are engaged in a nonstop fight with breast cancer, whether they are patients, caregivers, family, friends or champions of research. Team members with metastatic breast cancer (MBC) are engaged in a very literal nonstop fight. MBC is cancer that has spread beyond the breast to other organs in the body (most often the bones, lungs, liver or brain) and although it is treatable, it has no cure. MBC claims the lives of approximately 40,000 women and men each year. Throughout the month of October, we'll focus on MBC and team members fighting this aggressive form of cancer.

PHL-based Customer Service supervisor Maureen Smith is one of our 2017 Be Pink champions. She always knew she wanted to work for an airline. When Maureen was young, a family friend told her all about his travels and experiences in the airline industry and she knew that's exactly what she wanted to do. Thirty-one years ago, Maureen started her career as a Customer Service agent at Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BUF) in New York.

In January 2002, Maureen was first diagnosed with breast cancer. It metastasized to her spine just two years later. For the past 13 years, Maureen has gone to chemo treatments every Monday to keep the cancer from returning. Just recently she switched doctors and is trying a new regiment, decreasing her doctor's visits from weekly to every three weeks. Get to know more about Maureen below:

Did you go to college?

Yes, I have a degree in Transportation and Travel Management from Daemen College in Buffalo, New York.

What's your favorite candy?

If I had to pick a piece of candy I would pick a Kit Kat. I love to take the chocolate off the wafers and eat them one wafer at a time.

How many doctor visits do you have each year?

I used to go every week so that would be 52, but I recently started going once every three weeks; it makes me feel like I have a normal life again.

What is the first thing you do in the morning?

The first thing I do in the morning is curse my alarm clock since I work at 3:00 a.m. and my alarm clock goes off at 1:35 a.m. It just doesn't seem right to have to get up in the middle of the night.

Why is research important?

I believe that research is needed in metastatic breast cancer because we have to save more lives. It should not be a death sentence.

Who do you look to for inspiration?

I look to my guardian angel who is my mother to keep me going. Many people may not believe this but she comes to me in feathers – actual feathers that appear when I'm out and about. She lost her battle in 1989 to breast cancer and I miss her every day.

What advice do you have to share with someone on their own cancer journey?

My best piece of advice for someone going through breast cancer is live for today and don't give up. Keep a positive attitude and accept what you have and don't let it take over your life. Ask questions so you understand what is going on and how it is going to affect your life.

What is your favorite vacation spot?

A cottage we rent on Lake Cayuga in New York's Finger Lakes. It is so peaceful and we always have a great time relaxing and floating.

What are you most afraid of?

Losing this battle and not being here for my children and my loved ones. I am always fearful the days before my PET scan, waiting for the other shoe to drop and the words "your cancer has returned." I don't believe that feeling will ever go away.

Where do you go to escape?

I love to lie on a raft and float, whether it be in or pool or on a lake.