

# Bryande Murray writes for her mother and others who have fought cancer

By Rachel Dutil

**NEW SALEM** - Bryande Murray was only 8 years old when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Now, at age 22, she has self-published a children's book about her mother's experience, called *Mommy vs. the Monster*.

"When I wrote it for her, I never thought anyone else would appreciate it," Bryande said.

Bryande and her mother decided to try and get the book published.

"I had no clue what I was doing," Mrs. Murray said. "I got a self-publishing book that was my

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Maryann Murray has been a breast cancer survivor for nearly 16 years.

Her daughter, Bryande, considers her mom a hero.

Bryande bought an album, and thought about what she felt was most remarkable about her mother, she told *The Enterprise*. That, she said, was how she survived breast cancer.

She wrote a poem and drew illustrations for each page, and gave her mom the completed book for Mother's Day in 2004.

"Everyone just went nuts," Bryande said. Her mother, who works for the State Police, showed all her friends and co-workers, and everyone wanted a copy, she said.

bible for eight months," she said.

Mrs. Murray did most of the legwork to get the book published, and Bryande acted as a consultant, she said.

Both Murray women will be at a book-signing on Saturday, Sept. 23, at the Book House in Stuyvesant Plaza from noon until 1:30 p.m. Copies of the book can be purchased for \$16.95, with 20 percent of the proceeds being donated to a cancer charity. *Mommy vs. the Monster* can also be purchased at Borders or through amazon.com.

The 20-page hardcover book has a series of rhyming couplets, hand-written by Bryande, with colorful, cartoon drawings, also by Bryande. One page, for ex-



The Enterprise Rachel Dutil

*This daring mother-daughter duo tackled the task of self-publishing a children's book. Maryann Murray, left, is a breast cancer survivor of nearly 16 years, and her daughter, Bryande, is the author of the book, Mommy vs. the Monster. They will host a book-signing on Sept. 23 at the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza.*

ample, shows the mom with boxing gloves, fighting the monster, and reads: "She fought the monster all the time, morning, noon and night."

The book has a message of accomplishment and courage, capable of touching children and adults alike. "When someone who isn't a kid can appreciate it, that's really something," Bryande said.

Both Murrays say that they are surprised at how well the book has been received thus far. They have already sold 50 copies.

"I knew it was going to be nice, but I had no idea it was going to

stunned, she told *The Enterprise*. "I couldn't even speak," she said.

"She walked in the door, and was in tears," Bryande remembered.

"My dad never knew how to explain it," she said, so they kept it simple: "Mommy's sick."

"When you are learning things yourself, how do you teach your children?", Bryande rhetorically asked.

Bryande relied on her older sister, Janelle, who was 12, to help her understand. "I could ask her questions that I couldn't ask my parents," she said. "She stopped being the tormenting older sister."

## The healing process

In her nearly 16 years of being cancer free, Mrs. Murray has been active and outspoken in supporting others who have the disease, or who have survived it themselves, she said.

"You just want to do something to help find a cure," Mrs. Murray said.

She has found comfort and support for nearly six years from an oncology camp for women known as Camp Bravehearts. It is a not-for-profit organization that offers women with cancer a variety of weekend retreats with different themes.

Mrs. Murray says it is very important to her that she go to one of the retreats every year. "I feel so empowered by these women," she said.

"You get together with these women and you don't have to talk about your cancer, but it is there if you need it," she said.

Mrs. Murray has also taken part in the Race for the Cure, which raises money for breast cancer research.

Mrs. Murray is a fun and loving woman who wears a warm smile on her face, but, Bryande said, she lives in fear that, down the road, one of her daughters might get cancer.

"Every cancer is like an ambush," Bryande said. "Nobody can hide from it." Not even undeserving pets.

The Murrays were not prepared when their 7-year-old dog, Phoebe, got sick with cancer and died. "That was really tough for my mom," Bryande said. "Phoebe didn't smoke cigarettes," she said, alluding to the unfairness of the situation. "Now she's our angel," she said.



My mom is one of the bravest people I have ever met.

*Super Mom! Bryande Murray says her mom is a hero. She has just published a children's book about her mother's fight with breast cancer. This is a page from her book, Mommy vs. the Monster.*

'Every cancer is like an ambush.'

be this nice," Mrs. Murray said, adding, "It was well, well worth the effort."

In an author's note at the end of her book, Bryande writes: "It is for her and others who have fought this disease, or may be in the process, that I wrote this book. I hope that it gives courage and strength to them, and sheds some light on what a child's perspective is on such a terrible disease."

## "Mommy's sick"

As an 8-year-old, it was difficult to understand what was happening, Bryande said. "I didn't know a lot about what was going on," she said.

The day that Mrs. Murray was told she had cancer, she was

Mrs. Murray said that her husband, Timothy, did research in the library, and would call the cancer hotline for her, when she was too emotional to make the call herself.

"My husband absorbed everything," she said. Some people even thought he was in the medical field because he was so well informed, she said.

At the time of her diagnosis, Murray had two infected nodes, which, she said, automatically categorizes the cancer at stage 3.

She had a partial mastectomy, and went through both radiation and chemotherapy treatments, Mrs. Murray said. The treatments altogether lasted over a year, she said.