



There is an enormous selection of wigs and accessories at LuLu's Wiggin Out.



Luann Bauer of LuLu's Wiggin Out.

Hair Apparent

WHEN PEOPLE HEAR THE WORD CANCER, pain and sadness often come to mind. They will most likely jump to the distress and desolation that the disease causes. Luann Bauer was no stranger to these thoughts. She was distraught when she found out about her cancer diagnosis, but she was determined to give back to others in her position. She refused to let the disease beat her spirit down and stifle her hopes and dreams. Years later, Bauer owns a wig business to help women beat the pain and sadness she had to deal with, and she continues to inspire her whole community.

Bauer was 49 years old when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. The cancer showed up on an ultrasound. "It was devastating when I got the news," she says. A week after the diagnosis, Bauer's treatment began. She traveled to Chicago to regularly receive chemotherapy radiation.

Soon after her diagnosis, Bauer vowed to live her life by inspiring mottos such as "Never take life for granted," and "Live life to the fullest." She also made it a mission to travel and see the world with her supportive husband, whom she had been married to for 35 years, as well as her three sons.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of Bauer's diagnosis was when she lost her hair. "It's like losing a part of your womanhood," she said. To make matters worse, her first wig was quite an ordeal. It was real human hair, which takes a lot of maintenance and energy—something she didn't have when going through chemotherapy. Bauer found synthetic hair wigs soon after, and she had a much better experience. "[The wig] cheered me up," she says.

Despite adversities with her cancer diagnosis, she set her sights on helping other women in her position. The opportunity came to comfort others with cancer when the owner of her regular wig shop, Wiggin' Out in McHenry, moved to California. "She asked me to buy her store. I didn't really want to at first." However, she found her calling while in a traffic jam in Algonquin one day, near where her first store would eventually be. "I saw the license plate in front of me and it said 'Wiggin Out 4.' I still get chills to this day."

Bauer took the previous owner up on her offer, and, in February 2005, opened a store in Algonquin that was dedicated to selling wigs. Around five years later, Bauer opened another store in

Dundee that sold hats, purses, jewelry, and wigs for more formal occasions, such as proms and weddings. Today, she has combined the ideas of the two stores into one location in Crystal Lake, called Lulu's Wiggin Out.

The main purpose of Bauer's store is to help women with their hair loss battles. Dana Ratzek, one of Bauer's wig specialists, said, "We are developing more options for temporary or permanent hair loss."

If a woman is looking for a wig, she is first taken to the back of the store to look at the wig options. Bauer encourages appointments, but they are not at all required. She has accumulated more than 100 different styles and colors, all of which are piled on shelves on the back wall of the store. The customer is then taken to the dressing and styling room right next to the wall of wigs for her appointment to style the wig.

This back room is the highlight of the store. It is decorated with warm lights and many garden accents. There is one open styling chair right when you walk in, and two other styling areas with curtains for privacy. Bauer has made the atmosphere warm and inviting, with the ability to be private.



Lulu's Wiggin Out in Crystal Lake. There is also a location in Algonquin.

"Many of the women talk and relate over their experiences," she says.

Bauer also tries to make the medical and financial aspect of buying a wig as easy as possible. The store provides the means and support for the women that come in to deal with their insurance companies easily.

Lulu's Wiggin Out does not only specialize in wigs. The store carries hair additions, hats, scarves, and plenty of clothes for those that do not need any hair treatment. One would never guess by walking into the store for the first time that Lulu's is known for selling wigs. There are countless clothing racks filled with well-known and local labels. Bauer also has a gorgeous collection of hats. "Our supplier has made hats for the Royal Wedding and the Kentucky Derby." It is no surprise that the store has been named *Northwest Herald's* "Best of the Fox" women's clothing boutique for five years in a row.

Bauer is active in local events to raise awareness about cancer, and her store. She has created many fashion shows at surrounding country clubs and partakes in fundraising walks and runs. In October and April, Lulu's Wiggin' Out holds a Ladies Night Out in the store. Customers have the opportunity to look around the store while enjoying hors d'oeuvres.

One of the most pertinent events that Bauer helps with is the Hank Bauer Golf Outing (held in August), which is dedicated to Bauer's late husband who died of prostate cancer three years ago. Half of the proceeds go to prostate cancer research, and half go to the Cary-Grove Junior Trojans to upkeep their sports fields, a cause Hank Bauer was dedicated to.

Bauer's store is an important addition to the Chicago Suburbs. Her story is one of bravery, inspiration, and spirit. Bauer says of her experience with

a cancer diagnosis and her store, "It's bad enough to deal with cancer. If you don't have to worry about your hair, it's wonderful."


For more information on LuLu's Wiggin Out, visit www.luluswigginout.com. 



PHOTO: TAO ZHANG

Lily Cusack is a sophomore at the University of Iowa where she is studying journalism and French. She was an intern at QB this summer



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