

## The Value of Sisterhood

**The first role a woman plays** is daughter, and some, if they are lucky, get to play the role of sister. Wish Martin and her sisters have a bond that cannot be broken, though breast cancer tried 17 years ago.

"I had never had a mammogram, and I was 46 years old, an age by which every woman should have had at least three," says Wish. "But I never took the time. I was too busy. I was Super Mom!" Wish felt like she was doing everything right. "I did not eat pork or red meat, and I never got sick, not even a cold," she says.

At the time of her diagnosis, two of her four children were in college. "I was diagnosed during my children's Christmas vacation," she recalls. "For me to say to them 'mommy has cancer' was almost unbearable." The two women whom she counted on for strength and prayers were her older sisters. "They call us the Golden Girls," says Wish. Dottie is the oldest, Fluffy is the middle sister and

Wish is the youngest. Her sisters did not live close by, but they kept in contact almost daily.



When Wish heard about the Sister Study from her doctor, she knew it was perfect for them. The Sister Study is a nationwide effort conducted by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to learn how

environment and genes may affect one's chances of getting breast cancer. Women in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, ages 35 to 74, may be eligible to join if their sisters had breast cancer and if they have never been diagnosed themselves. Breast cancer affects women from every walk of life, so the Sister Study is seeking women of all backgrounds, occupations, ages and ethnic groups.

Volunteering for the Sister Study was only the first step in Wish's journey to support breast cancer awareness. She is particularly committed to involving African American women and women in underserved populations in the study. Wish co-founded Sisters Surviving, a support group for women of color who have been diagnosed with cancer.

**Action!** To learn more about the Sister Study, visit [www.sisterstudy.org](http://www.sisterstudy.org) (para español, [www.estudiodehermanas.org](http://www.estudiodehermanas.org)), or call (877)-4SISTER (deaf/hearing impaired call (866)-TTY-4SIS). ■