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While many cancer support groups like "Just for Us" function similarly with a group of cancer patients getting together once a month or so in a conventional, meeting room type atmosphere, other breast cancer support groups meet in a little different environment. For Mike Seroczynski of Petoskey, that meant watching his mom attack her breast cancer in a vastly more "Michigandy" kind of way: through a support group that meets in a river and goes fly fishing, called "[Reeling and Healing Midwest](#)".

Seroczynski's mother, Margaret, "Peg" Seroczynski of Branch will be cancer free two years this coming February. In that time, she and her daughter, Catherine Seroczynski of Chicago, have been active in a cancer support group that teaches women how to tie flies, put on waders and then get out in the water and fly fish. The group believes that the rivers and lakes and streams in Michigan can be "healing waters", according to the group's website. For Seroczynski, 66, [Reeling and Healing Midwest](#) has done the trick.

The not-for-profit group is devoted to offering fly fishing retreats for cancer patients several times a year, most of which are held at the Au Sable and Pere Marquette rivers. There's no shortage of volunteers, some of whom are men who want to help the ladies fly fish, since the vast majority have never even touched a rod and reel before. "We have one-on-one volunteers for each gal. They have their own person to work with them in the river because most of us have never tied flies or fished in a river before," Seroczynski explained, "Some of the gals come from bigger cities like Detroit and at first they look around at each other and say what are we doing up here in the wilderness, but then they get in just love it. It's really great."

Daughter Catherine, who has not had breast cancer but nevertheless makes the group her passion, became the chief fundraiser, procurer of equipment donations and the president of [Reeling and Healing Midwest](#)'s board. Seroczynski said her daughter's successful effort has made it so the support group can provide everything needed to fly fish for the beginner. The group charges a nominal \$25 fee for a two and a half day fly fishing retreat on one of the rivers and that includes room and board, waders, rods, reels and all the equipment conceivable for a successful fly fishing adventure. "You as a survivor just come. Everything is taken care of. We even make sure they have transportation. We want to make sure nobody has to incur any costs they don't have to because they've already been through enough," Seroczynski said.

Women of all ages and all stages of breast cancer have joined the [Reeling and Healing Midwest](#) effort, said Seroczynski. She added that while the group started basically as a breast cancer support for women, they also now welcome women with other cancers and they're branching out with similar support groups geared to the therapeutic effects of fly fishing for men with cancer. No matter the variables in their personal circumstance, Seroczynski said the reaction is always the same when a support group member first reels in a fish on their fly rod. "Oh my God, they just go nuts. It can be just a little tiny thing they bring in, but they just go nuts. And we take a picture. And then we put a special (feather) boa around their neck like a trophy. Some of them get into the water and don't want to get out," she said. And for women who aren't physically able to get waders on and get into the river: "Well, for women who can't stand very long, we take chairs out for them to fish," she explained.

They also hold reunion retreats, sometimes in the winter months, where they get together and have fun in the snow as "snow bunnies" she laughed. "We have so much fun. But of course we have our serious moments too, because that's what brought us all together in the first place. We talk a lot about what each of us has been through," she said.

Son Mike ... has volunteered to help at a couple of [Reeling and Healing Midwest](#) retreats. The times he spent helping the ladies to fly fish affected him deeply, he said, by giving him a better perspective of what his mom and the other women were up against in their battle against breast cancer. "It was a very humbling experience for me and I'll never forget it," he recalled, "because I got to meet some of the strongest women in the world."

For more information about [Reeling and Healing Midwest](#), call 866-237-5725 or check out their website at: [www.reelingandhealingmidwest.org](http://www.reelingandhealingmidwest.org) ...