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'Comfort Care' Finds Niche With Cancer Patients

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When Helene Gruber was a recovering cancer patient, she found it hard to find foods that provided her body with enough nutrition to help with her healing.

Then, as systems director for Nutrition Services at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, she realized that the majority of cancer patients lacked basic nutrition education.

Those experiences led to the creation of Comfort Care Foods, a startup Northern Kentucky company that is already finding considerable success in a "niche" market.

Gruber worked with long-time food manufacturer Millard Long to develop the recipes and develop a marketable product.

"There's really nothing like it on the market," Long said.

Operating out of a small building on East Bend Road in Boone County, Comfort Care Foods took its products to market in January and produces about 600 cases of specialty soups each day,

The ingredients are all-natural vegetables and products taken directly from the soil.

"It comes packed with all kinds of good anti-oxidants," Gruber stated.

Most of the produce is locally grown. Much of it is produced by former tobacco farmers.

Long said production is very labor intensive, but satisfying.

"We're able to take fresh produce – the surplus produce from the farmers in Kentucky – and turn it into some value-added food products that really reach out to help people," he added.

In fact, Comfort Care Foods is close to opening a new facility in Owenton to process tomatoes so they can be turned into products throughout the year.

Reaction to the soups and baked goods sold by the company has been positive, according to Long and Gruber.

"Patients eat it. They gain energy from it. They maintain their weight. They maintain their body and they start on the process of healing," Gruber said.

Jackie Wood is a believer as well. She calls Comfort Care products a miracle.

When Wood began Interferon treatments for her cancer, her energy disappeared.

"By the sixth day of treatment I was beat down," she recalled.

The Dillonvale woman lost her appetite and seven pounds in just five days.

Then, a friend told her about Comfort Care soup. She put four tablespoons in a bowl and put it into the microwave.

When the bell rang and she opened the door, Wood said she was blown away by the aroma.

"It immediately stimulated my appetite to the point where for the first time in a week I felt like eating," Wood said.

Wood is now cancer-free, but hasn't stopped singing the praises of a company determined to help make life better for cancer patients and their families.

"If it had not been for the soups and Comfort Care Food products, I just don't think I would have had a successful treatment regimen," Wood added.

Comfort Care Foods products are available at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Tischbein Pharmacy, Kunkel Pharmaceuticals and Natural Life.

Company officials say prices for their soups are comparable to other natural food products. A 26-ounce jar costs \$7.99 and a 16-ounce jar is priced at \$3.99.

They'll be sold in Biggs stores and Remke Markets in July.

They can be ordered at comfort-care-products.com

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