



NAME **Robin Whitten** AGE **60**
CAUSE **Pink Tulip Project**
HOMETOWN **Portland, Maine**
FAMILY **Husband Rob; son Denny, 24**

DURING THE LONG MAINE WINTERS,

the prospect of tending her garden come spring always lifted Robin Whitten's spirits. But her flowers took on even greater significance when Robin was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2004. While struggling through treatment, she read that visualizing something positive can be a source of strength. "So I pictured my beautiful garden—I was determined to make it to May to see it in full bloom," she says.

A year later, with her cancer in remission, she was struck by a desire to give back. "I was grateful to be a survivor and wanted to create a visible symbol of the need for a cure—while also raising money to find it," Robin says. "I thought planting pink tulips in a public space could inspire others."

Robin decided to contact the Portland Parks Department and got permission from Trinity Park to plant about 400 bulbs. That spring Robin and the Maine Cancer Foundation (MCF) hosted a ceremony at Trinity for caregivers and friends.

Robin worked with civic leaders, the MCF and other nonprofits to find sponsors and to organize the Pink Tulip Project in parks, garden clubs and schools statewide. As word spread, people asked Robin for advice on creating their own gardens. Last year more than 75 gardens and 40,000 tulips were planted by survivors, friends and families. So far approximately \$50,000 has been raised for the MCF's Women's Fund.

Robin hopes her project will continue to expand. "The gardens encourage people to believe that someday we will find a cure," she says. "Plus they're gorgeous. Who doesn't love a path of pink tulips?" ●

To start a garden in your hometown or make a donation, visit pinktulipproject.org.

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