I don’t know if I have ever shared this story but twenty years ago when I was a scared newlywed who had just been told she had Stage 3 breast cancer and I would needing a mastectomy, chemotherapy, radiation, years of hormonal treatment and all the works, I hid inside a room. All by myself.

I had no sister to call.

I didn't know anyone who had breast cancer.

I didn't know where to turn, who to talk to.

I didn't know how to have cancer.

And so I picked a Hollywood movie called Dying Young - Julia Roberts was in the film - about a man with terminal cancer. I watched and rewatched it. Over and over and over again.

I replayed the chemotherapy scene. I took mental notes. How long before he lost his hair? How did he deal with the people around him? Did it look painful? Even…. how soon before he lost his life?

So let’s just say that 20 years ago, I was scared. And didn't have a clue. And learned all that I could from someone who I never knew, who never even actually had cancer.

But all that changed quickly. Strangely, the ugliness of a cancer diagnosis brings in this beautiful ripple efffect where people start coming, and calling, and lending their ears, their shoulders and every part of them. We gathered first in tiny groups, then in bigger gatherings leading up to assemblies. We would laugh or cry and even laugh and cry at the same time. Questions became answers. Fear became assurance. Loneliness turned to companionship. No judgement.

As survivors we knew for certain: No one should be alone. Or scared. Or embarassed. Or unsure.

And that in a bigger, grander scale, in a nutshell is what you will find here today. That is what Silver Linings is all about. Welcome to Silver Linings.

Today, I hope after this and onwards, I hope like me:

You will have many to call.

You will know many who will walk a similar path.

You will know how to have cancer. You will hold hands through it all.

You will have not just one but hundreds of sisters to talk to.

You will call them your sisters. You will take care of each other. Watch out for each other. You will keep telling your story. And they will listen.

Because someone out there needs to hear it.

To Hope and to Believe.

Our pain and our struggles are someone else’s HOPE. Always remember that.

Because that is the SILVER LINING to this story.

Putting this together wasn’t easy. We knocked on many many doors to get this to happen. You answered and you embraced our idea. Thank you: ***Unilab Bio Onco Inc, AC Health, Life Science, Del Monte, Roche, Pfizer, the Good Seed, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Metro Group, New World Diagnostics, Mylan, Parkway Cancer Centre, the de Guzman Group and Bayo.***

I am so proud to introduce you to a courageous group of women – Our board of directors - who strive every waking moment to help us realize the goals of our foundation ICanServe.

But before that let’s take a moment of silence for our warrior sisters of the board and tireless advocates we lost very recently - Lian Chua and Pamsy Tioseco. Remebering Lani. And Alice. And all those we aren’t with us but I know are guiding us. There is certainly a lot of Heaven in today’s event because so many we love are in heaven.

Board members, dear Sisters: We don’t say Thank you enough. So Thank you. We are sisters by heart.