Showing Appreciation for Lupus Caregivers

by BARBARA LEECH

Being Thankful for Lupus Caregivers

November is National Caregiver Month as well as the month where we all (hopefully) give thanks for all the good in our lives before we eat heartily on Thanksgiving Day.

It is a month that always has given me an impulse to reflect on what being thankful means and what it is I am thankful for. Having had a pretty rough year and facing new lupus challenges as well as a diagnosis of another autoimmune disease, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, I find myself with one true thing rising above all the struggle: my husband and caregiver, Adam.

I know I am not always fun to be around. I realize that even when I don’t complain about the pain I am in, he senses it.

I am not the same person he married and life did not go as one might have imagined it would. Don’t get me wrong — we have been blessed with what matters most, but it is hard to stay positive and playful when every day is something you must “get through” (hopefully without a trip to the ER).

But Adam is this amazing, calming force in all of my storms. And strangely, he is the only person I have ever met (other than fellow lupies) who seems to get what I am going through.

He may not understand the pain, but he wants to know what it feels like. He listens with his heart as well as his ears. That is, in fact, what I think all of us are seeking — heart listeners.

So this month, I am not going to be one of those people who post on Facebook all the obvious things you should be thankful for. Yes, of course, I am thankful for my home and my children.

My home is my shelter and my children are beautiful little beings who fill me with joy and love. Who wouldn’t be thankful for that? What is more remarkable is being thankful for the care and compassionate listening that comes naturally to my spouse.

I am thankful for his hand to hold and those moments when he looks at me and suddenly I feel somebody understands all that is happening within me.

Giving Lupus Caregivers Thanks

The question is, what can us lupies do to let our caregivers know how much they mean to us? Here are a few suggestions:

- **Leave a note of love and gratitude:** On occasion I will write a thank you for loving and caring for me note and stick it in my husband’s wallet. He finds it later and has that moment of unexpected thanks in the

middle of his day.
- **Bake a favorite dessert for no special reason:** I do this often. Cooking is my passion so I often show my love by making his favorite dessert or even a special dinner.
- **Accept help when offered:** I tend to fight accepting help. I think this frustrates my husband because as he says, “I would not offer if I did not want to do this for you.”
- **On days I am feeling better, I do a little something extra:** Whether it is clean all the bathrooms or organize a closet, I think it just does his heart good to see there are some days that I can be the old me and get stuff done. He knows it makes me feel human again which is much more important than the actual task I completed.
- **Express your appreciation, often.** Every. Single. Day.

I think when we are caught in a cycle of health visits and pain, it is so easy to forget the support we get from those who love us. Being thankful for and acknowledging those who are truly there for you and support you through each lupus battle is the perfect way to show you care.