



Sandra Muvdi, president of the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation, is surrounded by love and children she has helped. Photo by Lisa Nalven.

## Warrior Woman

BY KIKI BOCHI

Cancer is part of Sandra Muvdi's everyday life. After she lost her only child to the disease, she started a foundation to help local families deal with the paralyzing financial problems that can follow those awful words, "Your child has cancer."

Nothing could fill the void of losing her child, but helping other families became Muvdi's reason to get up every morning. She built a foundation from nothing other than hard work and determination. Its mission is to provide emergency financial assistance to ensure basic necessities such as rent or electricity to families dealing with a pediatric cancer diagnosis.

Named for her daughter, the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation was celebrating its 10th anniversary last year when Muvdi got an unexpected piece of news. She had breast cancer.

"I was in denial. I thought it must be a mistake. I was petrified," Muvdi recalls. "I wanted to run away from myself."

Her Stage 2 cancer was detected after a routine mammogram, she says. There was no lump, nothing that might have hinted at the problem. She elected to have both breasts removed and underwent chemotherapy. Her treatment took up most of last year. She calls 2015 her "healing year."

Muvdi urges other women to be vigilant about getting their mammograms on time. Getting tested regularly probably saved her life. Her cancer would not have been detected as soon as it was without a mammogram, she says. "If I had waited until I detected a lump, it would have been way more advanced," she says.

Her strength during her treatment was inspired by the children she helps, she says. "Going through chemo gave me a higher level of empathy for the children," she says. "I figured if they can do it, I can do it... They continue to inspire me."

Her treatment complete, Muvdi spent three months traveling the world, something she couldn't have imagined before her illness. "It was a different journey after my cancer journey," she says. Now, with her cancer behind her, she is happily refocused on other families that need help. "I'm fortunate to have caught it when I did and to be able to look forward to the rest of my life."

For those currently battling breast cancer or any other disease, she has a message: "You have to believe in tomorrow and that the best is yet to be."

To learn about the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation, see [jjccf.org](http://jjccf.org)