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.....





BY
MELISSA
KENYON

HEART OF PINK

When life throws us curveballs, it's nice to know that we're on the field with someone who can relate. Someone whose friendship is unwavering and whose empathy is unwavering. Cheryl Ungar, a breast cancer survivor of 22 years, is that cherished friend for many special women. Since 2010, her eponymous nonprofit, Cheryl Ungar Gives, has provided three and soon to be four deserving couples touched by breast cancer with dream weddings. This effort, aptly named The Wedding Pink, offers more than just a free wedding. With each union comes a wave of love, a feeling of community and the realization of hope. Cheryl understands the emotional and physical struggles these women face and she believes The Wedding Pink is her fated outlet for giving back to the community that supported her on her own path to remission.

After surviving breast cancer, Cheryl became inspired to combine her personal passion for weddings with her yearning to help people facing the trials associated with the disease. Her brainchild, The Wedding Pink, provided the perfect opportunity to present couples with a fresh start or a much-needed silver lining.

The first pair to receive a wedding from The Wedding Pink was Melissa and Jeff Childs who said "I do" at Denver's Mile High Station in 2011. Just before Melissa's 31st birthday, she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. Jeff was there for Melissa through the trying months that came, and he eventually professed his love for her with a romantic proposal on a mountain top in Breckenridge. "I was attracted to her thirst for life," recalls Jeff. Ultimately, it was this thirst for life that allowed Melissa the chance to continue living her life with a full heart.

Two years have passed since Melissa and Jeff tied the knot, and the couple could not be happier. Now cancer free, the pair will soon welcome their first child, a baby boy. "After a year of trying, we were able to conceive naturally. We know this is a gift from God. We're so excited to meet the little guy and begin the next journey in our adventure together."

Erin and Ben Price were the most recent recipients of The Wedding Pink's giveaway. In 2013, the lovebirds traveled from Alexandria, Virginia to exchange vows at the Wine Country Inn in Palisade, Colorado. Like Melissa and Jeff, Erin and Ben faced breast cancer together at a young age. Despite the stress and sadness that came with the disease, the couple fought on, becoming more solidified in their relationship along the way. "Cancer was definitely not part of our life plan, but Ben stayed by my side the entire time," notes Erin of her husband's compassion.

Today, Erin and Ben are also cancer free, and they continue to remain close friends with their Wedding Pink family. "There's something about meeting another person that's gone through breast cancer at a young age. There's an instant connection through having that shared experience. We quickly became friends with Melissa and Jeff."

The Wedding Pink's annual giveaway is made possible by vendors that generously contribute to the cause. Not only do the selected couples experience a nearly cost free union, the weddings are impressively valued between \$30,000 and \$40,000. Cheryl is repeatedly able to recruit top vendors local to the selected wedding site, and

not a year goes the by that she's not blown away by the industry's readiness to give. In fact, vendors clamor to give year after year.

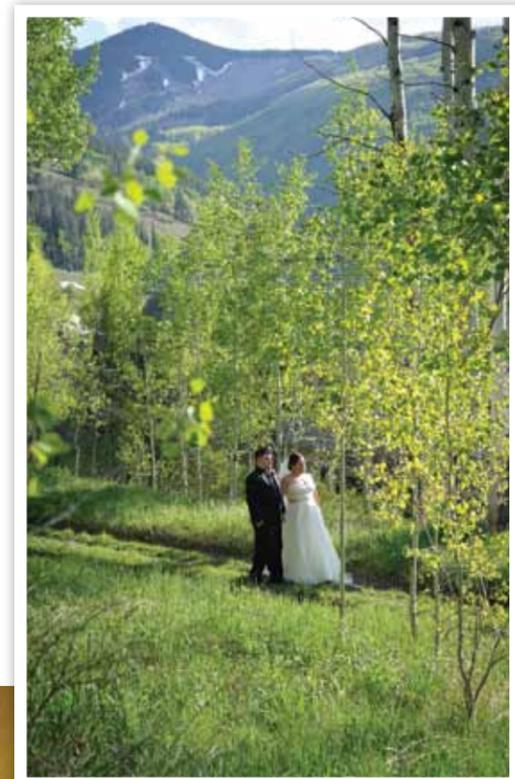
Planning a wedding can certainly be a daunting task for anyone, but for a couple that's just experienced months of hardship caused by breast cancer, the process becomes unfathomable. Thanks to Cheryl Ungar and The Wedding Pink couples like Melissa and Jeff and Erin and Ben can feel loved and understood. With each wedding giveaway, Cheryl's "pink family" grows, as does the hope that tomorrow will be filled with life, and with love.



Couples interested in submitting a story to The Wedding Pink can visit cherylungar-gives.com for more information. Couples must be engaged or soon-to-be engaged and recently impacted by breast cancer. The Wedding Pink is not limited to brides who suffered from breast cancer, but can also involve the bride or groom's extended family. There are no income qualifications, but financial hardships detailed in a couple's story are taken into consideration by the deciding panel of judges.



The Wedding Pink
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cherylungar-gives.com



PHOTOS BY KATIE VAN BUREN, CHERYL UNGER & JENNI FAUTSKO