



Susan Braden

The Woman Behind "Because I Can, Sir"

BY DENISE HEIDEL

In March 2015, Susan Braden heard the words no one wants to hear, "You have cancer."

After the initial shock of learning that she had cholangiocarcinoma, Susan's determined spirit and creative drive were set in motion. She found a way to give her cancer a purpose and to inspire others.

It started with her journal. "I turned to journal writing as a way to process my emotions," said Susan. "My cancer is so rare – literally a one-in-a-million diagnosis. And, it was so easy to ask, 'Why me?' Once the initial shock passed, I began to reflect on my journal, and I used some of my thoughts to compose four songs. That got the ball rolling for what would eventually become a one-woman show.

"I have always been a performer," Susan continued. "My background includes musical composition and arrangement, soprano concert artist, voice teacher, pianist, jingle singer and actor. That's who I am. After my diagnosis, I made a conscious decision not to let my cancer re-define me. Instead, I wanted to use it to help others."

Susan turned to a friend in New York. "My friend was a Broadway performer and has also directed many shows, including some that we've worked on together. She reviewed the songs I wrote and encouraged me to pull together the show. When I performed an industry show in New York for other actors, directors and producers, the reception was warm and accepting. They encouraged me to get my message in front of others."

Because I Can, Sir is a performance that combines musical talent with self-effacing humor, wit and faith. "I performed my first show at a church in Arkansas in May 2016, and since then – I've juggled performing with chemotherapy," said Susan. "I've performed for audiences in New York, Utah, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia and I'm excited to be coming to North Carolina in September.

"My medical team offers incredible support, and I'm grateful for them," continued Susan. "However, I know that a cancer diagnosis is more than a team of doctors. Cancer is a deeply personal experience – for both the patient and the patient's family and friends. Cancer patients have to become active warriors in their respective cancer-battles. But, despite almost 1.8 million cancer diagnoses in this country every year, so many people feel isolated and alone after their diagnosis."

Through *Because I Can, Sir* – Susan has found a way to live in the moment and celebrate today. "There's no point in focusing on an 'expiration date' unless it's on a milk carton," said Susan. "Every day I wake up is a gift from God, and I'm going to make the most of every day He gives me. If I can help others to understand that they aren't alone in their pain, anxiety or fear, then I feel that I've won."

Susan continues to be amazed by the show's reception. "There are so many different takeaways! Everyone who has seen the show seems to have a different point of view from it," Susan said. "The amazing thing is that it's for anyone. With the number of cancer patients in America – roughly 40% of our country is personally touched by cancer. While I wish I didn't have cancer, I know God is using it. With that in mind, it is my humble privilege to offer encouragement and support in the best way I know how."

Learn more about Susan Braden and her one-woman show, *Because I Can, Sir* online at www.BecauseICanSir.com.

Susan Braden will perform her one-woman show, *Because I Can, Sir* at Ardmore Baptist Church on Sunday, September 15th at 3pm. The event is free and open to the public. A love offering will be received.

Ardmore Baptist Church is located at 501 Miller Street in Winston-Salem. Visit www.ArdmoreBaptist.org for additional information.

