Start a Fresh Chapter

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If cancer has been the recent focus of your life story and you're ready to turn the page, then consider A Fresh Chapter. The nonprofit organizes one- to two-week-long "volunteer experiences"—domestically and abroad—for cancer survivors and caregivers. Destinations have included India, Peru, Costa Rica and South Africa.

"Our mission is to heal the emotional scars of cancer through volunteerism, meaningful travel and programs designed to reframe adversity and redefine what's possible," explains founder and CEO Terri Wingham, who had breast cancer in 2009 when she was 30. In a quest to feel useful and empowered after that ordeal, she signed up for a volunteer program in Africa, where she learned that "struggle is universal and that even if I couldn't go back to who I was before cancer, reinvention was possible."

Inspired by the trip, Wingham launched A Fresh Chapter in 2013 so that others affected by cancer could experience similar life-changing rejuvenation. Each "odyssey" involves months of community building beforehand and is built on four pillars—volunteer, educate, empower, connect. To help cover the nearly $5,000 cost, volunteers get support in fundraising, and scholarships are available.

About 230 people have embarked on an odyssey and served more than 33 volunteer programs. After a 2017 program in Peru, 75% of participants said they felt their life had more meaning, while others reported increased resilience, peace of mind and a sense of belonging. The nonprofit also offers another program, ReFresh Experience for Cancer Advocates and Leaders, which addresses burnout and compassion fatigue. To learn more and to apply, visit AFreshChapter.com.

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