Problem Statement

Our client, the regional public radio station WITF, was seeking a way to create a virtual community of cancer survivors and supporters as part of their Facing Cancer Together campaign. They needed a way to let the community contribute their own stories and respond to each other’s experiences. As with the AIDS Quilt, WITF wanted each person’s story or contribution to visually and creatively become something larger than themselves.

Approach

Using the Aids Quilt concept, we suggested a “digital quilt.” Using the quilt patch metaphor, we could offer the public a way to add “patches” containing memorials, survivor stories, appreciation, and support to share with friends and the greater community at large. By providing this solution digitally, we were able to take advantage of social media, rich media and other web-based technologies to create a compelling and highly interactive user experience.

Solution

This meaningful initiative has resulted in a beautiful collage of images, stories, and videos that are providing cancer patients with hope and support. The Digital Quilt is available publicly at
www.facingcancertogehter.co, where people are connecting their lives through sharing stories and insights about dealing with cancer.

Upon arriving at the Website, the Digital Quilt provides simple instructions on creating a new patch, navigating the Web site, and searching for people and stories that will interest you. When you double-click on a patch, it rises from the quilt and moves toward you. Clicking it again accesses the patch’s text, image and media features. Many patches contain videos of cancer survivors that tell inspirational stories of their experience. When you “flip” the patch over, you can read their story, see additional pictures, and read other people’s comments or add your own. Anyone can add a “patch,” whether you’re telling your story as a caregiver, creating a patch in memory of someone, or sharing your own experiences with cancer. All of the patches are created by individuals, except four simple patches from the corporate sponsors.

After creating a free account, you can begin building a patch by including uploaded pictures, audio, or video. Lengthy stories are no problem—scroll bars appear when needed. The left-hand panel of the patch, where comments appear, lets you take part in a conversation about the patch without revealing personal information, such as your email address. An important part of the quilt is the ability to share with friends. You can do this easily by clicking an icon to share via email, Facebook, or Twitter.

You can further customize the experience by creating your own quilt made from patches that match a search term like “mother,” “father,” or “survivor.” These customized quilts can also be shared on social media or more privately by emailing friends.

The Digital Quilt’s popularity took off immediately. WITF is pleased by the way the quilt has captured the hearts and imaginations of those in the region. Delighted by its success, the agency has decided to keep the campaign going longer than originally planned. It had been scheduled to come down after the nine-month campaign ended, but because of high public interest and involvement, it remains available well into its second year.
Other Applications

After launching this application for community building and information sharing, our research has yielded additional opportunities for this quilt concept to be used and implemented. With some modification, this technology could be applied to knowledge management, immersive learning, team building, employee onboarding, and international and transcultural communications and awareness.

Link

Facing Cancer Together: [http://www.facingcancertogether.co/](http://www.facingcancertogether.co/)