

# SHOW GOES ON FOR BRAVE JO

Laughter and tears as cancer mum raises £7k for hospice

**A SELFLESS** mum has raised thousands of pounds for a cancer charity while fighting her own battle against the disease.

Jo Russell of Pilgrims Way, Detling, was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer last February.

Despite this devastating diagnosis Jo, with the help of her friends and family, put on a show and raised more than £7,000 which she gave to The Heart of Kent Hospice in Aylesford on Friday.

The masked burlesque ball at the Ramada Hotel in Maidstone held an audience of 250 spellbound with the supple skills of Jo's best friend, Jo Roper, a dance teacher, who started proceedings with a pole dancing demonstration and ended with a burlesque fan dance.

The stunning performance, on a night of high emotion, induced tears among the crowd and left Jo, 35, overwhelmed by the incredible generosity of her friends.

She said: "Jo's been my best mate for nearly 10 years and she looked so beautiful as she danced.

"It was her idea to put on a show to raise money for the Macmillan nurses who have provided such wonderful care for myself and others but she was so busy at work she didn't have time to organise it all.

"I felt I was going a bit mad having nothing else to think about but my illness so I said I'd do it and Jo could put all her energies into the dancing.

Report by **Andy Gray**

"Everyone I approached was so helpful. "I popped in to my local shop to buy flowers for the show. Before I knew it they had decorated every table at the Ramada free of charge.

"One of the night's most popular events was an auction to dance with a Macmillan nurse, which went down very well with the men as you can imagine."

Single mum Jo, who has had to leave her job as a construction site worker, isn't about to rest on her laurels – there is too much living to be had.

On Saturday she absented down the side of a building in Maidstone's Fremlin Walk, and later this year she hopes to organise a "cash in the attic" auction.

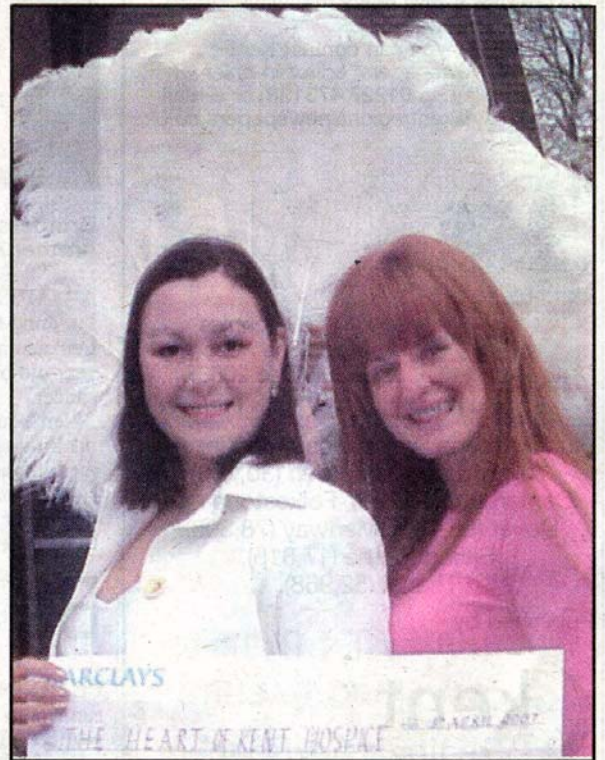
One of her favourite memories was seeing her son Josh, 16, dressed in full burlesque costume, selling raffle tickets.

She said: "People ask me: 'Do you ever say why me?' But I say: 'why not me?'"

"Josh isn't angry at the world for what's happening to me, but he has his moments.

"Half the reason I do these things is so he can see you don't have to lie down and wait for the worst to happen. I get tired now and I'm not superwoman but I never say no to anything any more."

To find out how you can help with Jo's fundraising please see [www.justgiving.com/jorussell](http://www.justgiving.com/jorussell).



**Feathered friends: Jo Russell (left) with her friend Jo Roper present a cheque to The Heart of Kent Hospice and the Macmillan nurses for £7,000.**

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