

For ABC's Roberts, fighting cancer tougher in public eye

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ATLANTIC CITY - The alarm clock goes off at 3:45 a.m.

Robin Roberts gets up about 15 minutes later, gets ready for work and heads to the "Good Morning America" studio in New York's Times Square.

It's not always easy.

"I have bad days," Roberts said. "I want to show it. It's OK to show you have a bad day."

For Roberts, it's part of what she calls her journey with breast cancer, something she made public during a Good Morning America broadcast last summer. The decision to go public wasn't easy.

"No way, no how," Roberts said in an interview before taking the stage as the main speaker at the 19th annual Stainton Society Brunch at Caesars Atlantic City.

Roberts said she first wanted to keep her illness secret. She didn't want to worry her 84-year-old mother. She didn't want the publicity to overshadow her work as a broadcast journalist.

And, she said, there was the "embarrassment" of an athletic woman who often reported on health issues admitting that she was ill.

"I felt my body let me down," Roberts said. "I was ashamed. I had to overcome that."

She did, in part through the advice of her mother, who told her, "Your mess is your message," and that discussing it might, in the end, help others.

If nothing else, Roberts said the response from people - letters, gifts, prayer shawls and e-mails - has helped her.

"I wasn't prepared for it," Roberts said. "I've been blown away."

The Stainton Society is a major fundraising organization for Shore Memorial Hospital in Somers Point. The society has raised about \$10 million in the past 19 years for different hospital functions, including its cancer center.

This year, society contributions will help the hospital buy a \$2.5 million scanner that a society statement said uses the "most advanced cancer detection technology available."

After taking the stage, Roberts said the society is "making a difference in your community."

"Your generous contributions are keeping Shore Memorial in the forefront," she said.

Roberts said early cancer detection is key and believes it's helped her.

"Take action, and be diligent about taking care of your health," she said.

It's crucial for those with cancer, Roberts said. "All you want is a chance. You just want a shot."