



The Gaila Story

Our story is a narrative on the transformative power of female friendship. A story of four women, Gail, Sarah, Paige and Debby, friends for decades, coming together to make a difference. To make a difference in Gail's life, and in the process, to help women and their friends everywhere feel better while coping with the challenges of chemotherapy and serious illness.

Nineteen years after Gail's first bout with breast cancer it returned - Stage IV, with metastases to her lungs. With increasing symptoms, Gail could no longer perform her demanding job as an international business professor and director of an MBA program. Without the daily work she had loved for decades, her friends were concerned about how she would fill her days. Then Gail came up with an idea to make beautiful hats for chemo patients from fabrics she had collected during her travels. Stacks of delicious silks lay fallow in her closet and now she had time to make something meaningful for her fellow patients on a difficult journey. She designed a hat to fill a need she knew well.

When a woman loses her hair it is deeply challenging to her sense of femininity. Gail knew this from experience and her friends knew it instinctively. The options for women – practical adaptations of ball caps, scarves and ski hats – do little to make a woman feel attractive. More than anything, they say "I am sick."

Gail dreamed of hats that celebrated life, not illness. In her trips around the globe she had seen elegant fabrics and majestic headdresses that made a real statement about beauty, fashion and sensuality. Reminded of the gele, the beautiful wraps worn by Nigerian women, Gail came up with her own original design that was smashing, elegant and at the same time sensible.

From the moment she presented her first design, her inspiration was joined by her friends' enthusiasm to make it happen. Prototypes were made and tested and a concept was born. The hat was named "Gaila" - for Gail, for the celebratory meaning of gala, and for the hint of the gele.

The group wanted the hat to be free to any women facing serious illness so a non-profit organization, Gaila, Inc., was born. By accepting donations to the charity, hats could be provided to patients on a complementary basis. In this way, we could give something back to our fellow women and spread some joy in the world.

Confident that women facing illness would love the product, we also knew from feedback that the hat's stylishness and design made it appealing and appropriate for all women. And, since shopping is a universal female bonding experience, we created the concept of solidarity buying.

Women, in general, enjoy shopping together. Women looking for hair loss cover-ups will virtually always be accompanied by a friend or family member. We foresee friends and families buying hats for themselves and treating their loved ones to an additional hat or two in a favorite color. Buying pretty hats as a treat for a friend – especially knowing that it makes free hats possible for other patients – is a fun way to show support and lift the spirits of women momentarily insecure about the way they look.

Every woman understands the way a new lipstick or a pair of earrings or just the right accessory can make the day brighter – in an instant. The Gaila can do the same. The gift of a Gaila has an immediacy to it. It's personal. While great work is being done in research laboratories around the world, our goal is to reach out – in the present – to women suffering from serious illness. This is one of the things that sets the Gaila Fund apart. It is women helping women – healthy women and their not-so-healthy sisters – to celebrate their beauty, their lives and their friendship.

In friendship and in the spirit of giving back, proceeds from the sale of Gailas beyond what is needed to provide complementary hats will be distributed through grants for the benefit of women facing economic challenges.

The Gaila Team

Gail – The Artist

Gail has had a long career as a professor of international business. But her passions, besides travel, have been painting, sewing, and textile collecting. Her artistic side has always been there and now her cancer disability has given her time to explore it. The Gaila marries her compassionate understanding of the challenges to female identity that come with hair loss and her creative side.

Sarah – The Visionary

Sarah and Gail went to college together in 1970 and have been friends ever since. Sarah has had a rich career in marketing and public relations and came to shape the idea with a broad vision. To her the idea filled an obvious market niche – but had an even greater audience appeal. She brings an incredible ability to both shape an idea and implement it.

Paige – The Problem Solver

Paige and Gail met in 1974 when Gail met and married Paige's cousin. And today, no better a blood cousin exists. Paige has had an enormously successful career in real estate – a success based on her ability to provide solutions to family or organizational needs. She has an uncanny ability to hone in on an issue and then solve it.

Debby – The Quiet Counsel

Debby, Paige and Gail have all known each other since summers on Nantucket in the 70s. Considerate and steadfast, Debby has a way of looking at things that is often unexpected and always thoughtful. She can always be counted on for good advice and a well-balanced perspective.