

The Chronicles of Hope are the *real life* stories of those helped by Komen for the Cure's commitment to the care, research and understanding of breast cancer. These are their—and our—stories.

When Jamie Savage was 37 years old, she was recently divorced, moving to a new city, and had a high powered job that she loved and excelled in. What she wasn't prepared for was a life altering breast cancer diagnosis in the midst of all of the other changes.

Jamie had been receiving regular mammograms since the age of 30 because of a family history riddled with breast, ovarian and other cancers. Jamie felt the hard lump under her right breast and monitored it for a few months prior to having a needle biopsy, which confirmed her fears. In March of 2006, she was diagnosed with stage II, invasive lobular, ER+/PR+ breast carcinoma.

Jamie spoke with her doctor about fertility, but because her cancer responded to estrogen, he strongly advised against harvesting any eggs, and her insurance plan would not cover the procedure. After surgery, Jamie underwent chemotherapy and radiation followed by hormone therapy. Jamie experienced excruciating side effects from tamoxifen and stopped taking it after only one month.

Throughout her primary breast cancer experience, Jamie never stopped working. She was able to negotiate with her employer, work from home during the hours that she was least exhausted, and she exceeded all expectations for performance. As a result, a new position was created specifically suited for her talents. Jamie accepted the position and resumed her life learning to adapt to the "new normal" that is part of surviving breast cancer. This new normal included a healthier lifestyle through diet change and more exercise, as well as keeping her work life limited to 40 or 50 hours per week so that she didn't become too stressed or exhausted.

Despite her medical team's best efforts, treatments and her new lifestyle did not eradicate the disease. In 2010 Jamie learned that

"Most people would look at my situation as grim, but I don't. I look at it as an opportunity to inspire other people and give back."

her breast cancer had metastasized to her spine. This time, Jamie reports, "tamoxifen was not an option; it was a



Survivor
Jamie Savage

Diagnosis
**ER+/PR+ Metastatic
Breast Cancer**

Years of Survivorship
6

"My hope is that by having shared my story, not only will I reinforce the fact that working beyond your cancer diagnosis is possible and can be the key to living a healthy and quality life; but, also that it's okay if you decide that working is no longer in your best interest."

requirement.” Jamie says that even though the side effects were impacting her quality of life, she thinks about the correlation between stopping her hormone therapy in 2006 and her diagnosis of metastasis four years later. She advises, “If your oncologist recommends a treatment, it is really important that you follow through on it.” Jamie reports that when she received the news that the cancer had spread, “...something came over me that said, no matter what happens, you’ll get through it. If you only live the expected 2-3 years, then live life to the fullest and do what you can do.”

As a young woman with metastatic disease, Jamie actively sought out counseling. However, she felt that she wasn’t getting the help that she needed and specifically asked the social worker at her cancer center for a counselor who had either been a breast cancer patient, or who was experienced in helping those who were. She also wanted to join a support group, but says that she rarely goes because she feels like “the worst case scenario.” Jamie says that she doesn’t want her prognosis to scare people, but rather, wants people to look at her and say, “Wow! If I *did* get mets, I could make it. She’s doing it.” Instead, Jamie says that reading some of the online blogs is helpful because the best advice she has received is from other women with breast cancer.

Jamie also struggled with the decision to stop working. She had worked since she was 12 years old, so her identity was inextricably bound to her career. As it became more difficult to perform day-to-day work duties, her manager suggested that she consider utilizing her long-term disability benefits. Jamie spent hours researching how her benefits and pay would be impacted and finally opted to take the opportunity to take care of herself.

“I hadn’t thought about disability because, frankly, I didn’t feel like I had one.”

In order to combat the loss of her career, Jamie enrolled in an online program through the Oregon State University and is pursuing a degree in liberal studies. She also dedicated herself

to helping other women through the Susan G. Komen Oregon and SW Washington Affiliate. She wants to help in any way that she can, saying, “I’m open to whatever opportunities come out of this.”

To a woman newly diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer, Jamie advises, “It is going to be ok. Take a breath. Educate yourself because I guarantee you that your doctors don’t know everything there is to know about your situation.”

INVOLVEMENT WITH KOMEN

In 2009, Jamie first reached out to Komen. She was selected to serve on both the Inclusion Committee and the Patient Assistance Task Force of her local Affiliate. After she was diagnosed with metastatic disease, however, she wanted to do something more tangible. She says, “I knew I was making a difference, but I wanted to feel like I was making more of a difference.” She has since volunteered in the Survivor’s Booth at the annual health expo; spoken at the Breast Cancer Issues Conference in 2011; joined the Komen Survivor’s Choir and most recently participated in the Susan G. Komen Metastatic Breast Cancer Rountable at Komen headquarters in Dallas.

KOMEN’S RESEARCH INVESTMENT IN METASTATIC BREAST CANCER

Komen research dollars have been invested in every aspect of metastasis research from biology, prevention and early detection to treatment and scientific models. In just the past six years, over \$35 million in funding has been awarded to help interrogate why cancer spreads, which genes can suppress tumor growth, develop therapeutics to target metastasis and find ways to help the immune system fight metastasis.

October 13th in Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day. [Learn More.](#)

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