



CATHY COURSEY



In that moment I was unexplainably lost, incapable of comprehending the cancer conquering my insides, and filling my head with fear. Hello, I’m Cathy. I am a 3-year breast cancer survivor, 5th year Susan G Komen DFW 3-Day participant, Dallas Cowboys fan, and this is my journey.

It began in 2011; when I watched my lifelong friend Emily, participate in her first Susan G Komen 3-Day event. I was so inspired, that something inside of me yelled, “Cathy, you have to do this!” Why wouldn’t I? I had known people affected by this awful disease, and I wanted to do my part to raise awareness. I participated in my first walk in 2012. After watching so many individuals come together to walk 60 miles for a cure; being thanked by breast cancer survivors; and knowing us, as walkers, were making a difference; I decided then I would walk every year. Fast forward 6 short months later, I fell victim to the disease.

At that time, I had just turned 40 and never felt better in my life! I was a full-time working mom of three amazing children, wife to a hard-working and loving man, and always on the go. In May 2013, I went in for a baseline mammogram simply because that’s what women should do. That mammogram saved my life! Within two weeks, I was diagnosed with HER2 +++ Invasive Ductal Carcinoma in my left breast, and it was growing at a rate of 25 percent. If I had not had that mammogram, my oncologist told me that within months my situation would have been detrimental. I felt shocked, scared, vulnerable, and unprepared for such results but my fight-or-flight spirit did not allow it to overwhelm me. I opted for a double mastectomy & reconstruction and underwent surgery June 17. Due to the aggressive nature of the cancer it had already infiltrated its way into my left sentinel lymph node. It was inching its way closer and closer to claiming my 40 years of life. This now meant chemotherapy and a year’s worth of Herceptin treatments.

During chemo treatments, I continued to train for the 3-day walk, hoping that consistency and heart would bring me to the finish line. Determination and dedication led me to finish 30 of my 60 miles that year. I had the support of a remarkable team who pushed me in a wheelchair the other 30 miles, when I fell victim to the harsh side effects of the chemo. That year, I was also given the honor of raising the remembrance flag at the opening ceremony. From supporter to survivor, this is a moment I will never forget. I would never forget the day I was diagnosed. I would never forget thinking that my children could lose their mother and my husband could lose his wife. I would never forget the withering of my blonde hair, and having my family shave the rest. I would never forget the exhaustion chemotherapy caused. I would never forget feeling stripped of my femininity when I looked down after my double mastectomy. I would never forget the individuals who lost their lives to the cancer. I would never forget the undeniable love, and support of my family and friends during this time. I would never forget to count blessings, ever again.

Over the past three years, my journey has given me the blessing to spread a positive influence to family and friends. To Bonnie and Rachel, friends whom lost their battle to breast cancer, I was able to bring hope and courage, comfort through the pain, and a place of solace to their families. To Garrett, my 15 year old son, I have ignited a fine young man who was chosen as a Susan G. Komen Youth Corps member in 2014 and 2015, and will be walking with me and the G.I. JUGZ team at the 2016 DFW 3-Day - his total fundraising amounts to nearly \$5,000! Over the past three years, I've learned the value of a supporting and loving community, and that it’s okay to receive help; I've truly learned hope, and humility.

Last year, I had the privilege of performing in the Dallas Cowboys/Susan G. Komen breast cancer half-time show with my friends Vicki and Beverly (former DCC alumni) and Emily. After growing up watching the Cowboys with my family, it was an amazing feeling to be out on that field where our “Boys” play while also supporting my favorite cause. My most special Dallas Cowboy memory was seeing Ed “Too Tall” Jones # 72 when I was 8 years old. He was my absolute favorite Cowboy, and I loved watching him play. My family and I were out one weekend running errands. My Dad made a quick stop at a convenient store and when he got back in the car, we saw “Too Tall” walk inside. I begged my Dad to go in and ask for his autograph but he did not want to bother him. Needless to say I was disappointed, but still thought it was so cool to see my favorite Cowboy player. To this day, I still enjoy watching the “Boys” out on that field and our DCC perform!!

It would be an absolute honor to be chosen to share this experience with four other survivors in this year’s Breast Cancer Awareness Half Time show. I am very grateful for the opportunity to share my story.

BRIANNA HINOJOSA-FLORES



As a little girl (growing up in Mission, TX - home of Tom Landry), I made the choice to be a loyal Dallas Cowboys fan for life. However, we don't always get to choose what groups we belong to . . . On May 17, 2013, I found a lump in my right breast after coming home from the gym. Four days later, I was told I had Triple Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC) and that the cancer cells were multiplying at 70%. With an aggressive type of BC, there was no choice but to start chemotherapy right away. At the time, I was 41, married with 2 small children (3 and 8), a public servant, advancing in my career and had no family history of BC . . . AND now I was a member of a club I never imagined being a part of. Has breast cancer affected me? Absolutely! I have been affected physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, spiritually. However, how it affects us is what we have control over; and I have chosen to live as a SURVIVOR – with a strong faith.

On the day I started chemo, I learned that purple is the color for ALL Cancer Survivors. As such, I adopted the motto ‘Fighting Pink. Living Purple’ and every day of my BC journey (8 rounds of chemo and 6 surgeries over 3 years, including a double mastectomy and reconstruction), I wore purple nail polish on my toe nails to remind me that I AM A SURVIVOR and I GOT THIS! Throughout my journey, I have made every effort to walk the walk and share my story with others (even though I initially wanted to curl up and hide). I have

been featured in articles, magazines and newspapers encouraging men & women to do self-breast exams and to know their body, and to get regular mammograms. I have participated in a study by UTSW on TNBC as this type of cancer predominately affects African American and Latina women and have encouraged these groups to participate in the study. From a cultural standpoint, as a Latina, I want women to know they are not alone and that there are efforts to find a cure . . . but we have to participate and we have to talk about it. I have become someone that my doctors can refer patients to that may need support and can relate to them on many different levels – I lost my hair, had joint pain, suffer from osteopenia, went thru early menopause, etc. . . . the chemo effects are real. Going thru cancer is never easy and just because you are ‘cancer-free’ does not mean that you do not have lasting side effects or live with the fear of recurrence.

As a public servant (Councilmember in Coppell), I helped create the Living Well in Coppell initiative. While I started this prior to cancer (because I am a strong advocate for health / wellness), I have been able to contribute so much more now that I have been thru this life-threatening illness. While going thru chemo, I was fortunate to have a doctor that had done research on the importance of exercising and eating healthy while going thru treatment. Dr. Rao shared with me that there was evidence to show that doing so would slow down the spreading of the cancer cells and reduce the size of the tumor. On November 14, 2013, Dr. Rao performed my first surgery where she took my right breast and a few lymph nodes, and tested to see if there was any trace of TNBC. I remember her call like it was yesterday . . . “Brianna, you had a 100% response to the chemo and there is no trace of TNBC. This happens in 12% or less of cases like yours,” said Dr. Rao. Living a healthy lifestyle is just that – it is not temporary – it’s forever. And as a mother, I have served as a role model to my children and portrayed the importance of eating healthy and exercising.

In addition, I have become active in my local YMCA. While going thru treatment, I learned that the Coppell YMCA has a Livestrong Program that provides a personal trainer to cancer patients (at any point in their journey) and gives everyone in their immediate family a 3-month membership to the Y so that everyone can remain healthy, especially the caregivers. My family and I benefited from this amazing program; and I now serve on the board of trustees for the YMCA and promote this program for all cancer survivors.

So while going thru my journey, I remained a die-hard Dallas Cowboys fan and always looked forward to football season. It was something my son (Ivan) and I could do together no matter what. And when my husband decided to leave us because he could not handle this journey, my son (now 11) remained by my side as my true every day hero. He helped take care of his little sister, asked me how I was feeling every day, had his class make me cards and bracelets, and went to his elementary school principal to ask if she could have everyone wear pink and/or purple on the day of my first surgery . . . and they did. And on the days I was not sure I could take another chemo treatment, he reminded me that I was getting better and would be done with the treatments soon. When I was finally healed from the multiple surgeries, I was able to do 1 thing with my son that meant the world to him . . . throw and catch a football, as well as attend his football games. If chosen as a Star Survivor, I would take my son to the game and throw a football with him on the field. While the experience would be surreal for me as a fan of 44 years, the best part would be sharing this experience with him.

JILL JUBACH



I have this kid, his name is Austin. I gave birth to him at 20 years old. He was ALL boy growing up, and somewhere around age 5 he decided he liked the Cowboys. This was fine with me because, after all, they do have the best colors and clothes. This little boy has loved those Cowboys ever since. Just like his momma does. Let’s fast forward...

Just three months after turning 37, after coming home from the gym, I noticed a strange dent on the underside of my left breast. I tried to shake it off as a muscle pull, or strain, but the nagging feeling never left. I called my OB/GYN on Monday morning and was seen Tuesday afternoon. A whirlwind of testing and 11 days later, I was diagnosed with stage 2B Invasive Ductal Carcinoma. My boy was now 17 and a junior in high school. He was beginning to think about colleges and we were planning a visit to The University of

Texas and to see the stadium in Dallas for the following summer. But, unfortunately that winter I received the dreaded news. Not even old enough for a mammogram, I had breast cancer. Plans changed rapidly and we were soon facing chemotherapy and multiple surgeries. Single parenting on a teacher’s salary is hard enough, without the new medical bills. Texas faded from our dreams and we focused on living. The courage and strength he showed during the darkest days are more than I could have ever asked for. When I lost my hair, he shaved his head. When we needed dinner or groceries, he would go get it. Every single night he would come and kiss my bald head before bed and tell me he loved me. Who would’ve thought my self-absorbed (aren’t they all) teenage son would become my rock? Cancer wasn’t without it’s challenges, but throughout the bumpy road, somehow we survived.

In May of 2016, I participated in my first Susan G. Komen race for a Cure in Columbus, Ohio, as a SURVIVOR. I am proud to say that I earned a spot in the Honor Roll, because I was in the top 100 fundraisers of over 28,000 participants. I am honored to be on this list. I have a competitive streak, and am already devising ways to fundraise for 2017. My goal is to make it into the top 25. I have also participated in submitting videos for the Young Survivor Coalition telling newly diagnosed women things I wish I had known, and published a YouTube video documenting hair regrowth stages, in an effort to give other women hope. It has been 6 months since finishing the year-long treatment and only 3 months since the last surgery, so I am still learning how to become involved in the movement to end breast cancer, but I think I have a pretty good start. Sadly, I also had a friend diagnosed after I was, because of my story, she felt uneasy hearing that I was diagnosed because of a dent, that she had her own dent checked. I feel as though, my cancer, may have saved her life too.

It has only been 18 months since that phone call, and some days it feels like it was a lifetime ago. The boy, well, he is now a freshman at Ohio University, studying sports management and hoping to intern in a couple years for the Cowboys. I am still teaching 4th graders, and most importantly we live knowing every day is a gift, every minute matters. What would it mean to me to win this contest? To be able to bring my son to Texas and see the team we love, in the stadium he has only dreamed of? I don’t think I can actually put into words what that experience would mean. He often wears a pink shirt that says “My mom is my hero”, and every time I see him in it, I think to myself “My kid is my hero.” I will never be able to make him understand what he did for me during that year, and how I know the sacrifices he had to make must have been devastating. But to be able to surprise him with this once in a lifetime trip would be the best "thank you" present in the world.

Did I mention, we live in Ohio? So, playing our home state Cincinnati Bengals is the perfect game for us! And...you know that guy, Ezekiel Elliott, he was a Buckeye. We love our Buckeyes as much as our Cowboys in this house. There was some serious jumping and screaming happening in our living room on draft night. I would LOVE, LOVE, LOVE to come show Zeke some Buckeye love in October!

BROOKE MORROW



I was diagnosed with breast cancer on July 3, 2014 at the age of 37. I had a family history of BC, but it was on my dad's side, so all doctors said that I was at no added risk. My immediate thought was "What will my 2 babies (age 6 and 9) do without a mother?" However, my faith in God is strong, and I drew on that strength and the faith of those around me as I faced the decisions about treatment and how to proceed forward as a cancer patient. I decided early on to not be a victim, but a SURVIVOR!! I found all the little signs everyday that God was with me and was sharing my pain and my journey. And my worries about my kids being affected by the "scariness" of my journey were quickly taken away when the oldest declared the summer of my diagnosis "the BEST summer EVER!!" because of all the playdates with friends!! I chose a lumpectomy in July 2014 to eradicate the cancer, then decided on a double mastectomy in November of 2014 after finding out that a genetic mutation was the cause. I had 4 major surgeries in a year and 1 month. After healing from my surgeries, I began to share in fellow survivors' journeys. I mailed pillows for post-surgery, offered laundry and grocery shopping services, and went with friends to mammograms when they were in the same situation. I spoke at a college in my hometown and gave some helpful hints to social work majors who may have to deal with breast cancer patients in their career. My goal is to be available to those who are facing the same experience and help alleviate the stress and worry.

As far as the Cowboys go, seeing them in the stadium would be a DREAM COME TRUE!! I have been a fan as far as I can remember...the only way we could get out of a Sunday nap after church would be if the

Cowboys were playing, and I can remember me and my Dad whooping and hollering for every touchdown, interception, and occasional bad call by the refs!! I would consider it a huge honor to represent breast cancer survivors while wearing the Star! Thanks for considering my admission.

KANDI STEWART



At the age of eight, I lost my beloved grandmother to breast cancer. Right before my 22nd birthday, my daddy passed away after his courageous fight against cancer. At the age of 40, I began my own battle against breast cancer. I was surrounded by an amazing support system who turned the negative word of cancer into positive ones like courage and conquer. I fought back with a positive attitude and faith that God had a plan for my life, and it would be good regardless of the outcome. I was granted courage to conquer cancer. Bravely, I shared my story as honestly as I could as the events unfolded before me through a Facebook page and a blog.

Before my bilateral mastectomy, I discovered a need for an affordable mastectomy recovery shirt to maintain the surgical drains I'd have for several weeks after my surgery. My mom designed and made me shirts. Then, my sister-in-law and I spent the weeks of my recovery redesigning the shirts based off my own breast cancer journey. We were on a mission to create a product to help other women recover from breast cancer surgeries and treatments more comfortably. As I went through chemo, my brother, sister-in-law and I started a non-profit which would allow us to gift Recovery Tees to patients in need. Helping others has brought me great joy and made my own fight against cancer worth it.

The Dallas Cowboys were also a part of my battle against breast cancer and didn't even know it. During the 2014-2015 season, Jason Garrett told the team over and over to finish the fight. I held on to those words. Friends bought me a Dallas Cowboys shirt with ""#Finishthefight"" on the back. I watched Jason Garrett's locker room speeches religiously. I doubt he knew that his words were inspiring a woman

fighting breast cancer, but they did. I finished my fight. I'm in remission and have returned to work. I'd love to shake Jason Garrett's hand and tell him thank you for encouraging me along side his players.

Breast cancer doesn't get to win. Together, we courageously conquered cancer.