

## **At 30, Cancer was a Purpose Unfolding**

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Like most people for most of my life I never thought much about cancer affecting myself or my loved ones until my Dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer when I was 16. Since he was one of those “tough guys” he did not go to the doctor until it was too late. Ever since he passed, I always knew cancer was scary and treatment options were tough, but it never crossed my mind that I would be battling this disease as well.

On June 2, 2015 my husband and I welcomed our daughter Oaklee into this world. I breastfed the first year and all I heard was how it decreased your risks for breast cancer and once again I never thought much about it. After a year of feeding and pumping we switched her over to cow’s milk and I started to let my supply dry up. It was in November of 2016 that I found a lump in my left breast at home. In my mind I immediately knew something was wrong. I saw my regular physician that week and was sent for my first ever mammogram. Once those results came back abnormal I was sent to Sarah Cannon. At Sarah Cannon I had biopsy and genetic testing done. I was diagnosed with Stage 1 Triple Negative breast cancer in my left breast and it had spread to one lymph node. I tested negative for BRCA gene mutations. Basically I figured I drew the short straw health wise, but little did I know that cancer was my purpose unfolding.

I had my port put in on December 23, 2016 and I started chemo on January 3, 2017. I underwent six rounds over an 18 week period and I finished on April 18, 2017. Through the process I worked full time. When the chemo made me tired and Neulasta drug made it painful to move I took a day off here or there, but all in all chemo went great for me. Whenever I started to feel down I would remember that I am at stage 1. I caught mine early and I’m healthy. I have a family that needs me, and most importantly, I have God’s support all the time.

I would also remember sitting next to people at chemo who were just trying to prolong their days, not get cured and it was a huge reality check. I decided right then and there that I could show people that you don’t have to be that “typical cancer patient” and look sick all time or act defeated. I chose to fight and show people that through prayer and faith that any mountain can be overcome. I got really good wigs, wore more make up and continued doing “normal” activities which I think helped me mentally overcome the thoughts of “I have cancer, I have cancer.” In June I had a double mastectomy with tissue expanders and as of September 14 I will have completed 5 weeks of radiation. After my surgery, I was told that my pathology reports were clear, and I am on a 3 month follow up for 2 years.

I have had a hard time finding women my age to relate to with my diagnosis. Being in my 30’s with a young family there are not a lot of people to turn to. Sure if I was in my 50’s or over it was easy to find someone, so the reason I want to be a part of the program is that I want to help younger women realize that even with cancer ... you are still You. You are still strong, beautiful and smart and that cancer enhances that no amount of chemo or any type of surgery can take it away. I wear my scars with pride and know that this disease tried to take me away from my family and friends, but I was not going to give cancer that power. Attitude is HUGE in fighting this battle! I want to show other women and their families that support and love can help just as much as medicine. I feel that I have been put here to help show women that cancer does not define you. It’s a part of your life, but not your whole life. I’m proving that you can be an inspiration to others no matter what.