



KICKING-CANCER CHRONICLE

EDITOR: BARON ROBISON

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO HAVE FOUGHT, OR ARE FIGHTING,
THE GOOD FIGHT AGAINST CANCER.

EDUCATING PEOPLE ON HOW TO LIVE AN ANTI-CANCER
LIFESTYLE BY EATING REAL FOOD AND DOING SOME MOVEMENT.

“I WILL SURVIVE THIS CANCER”

SUBMITTED BY ROXANNE CASTRO (Q. 1 2024 GOTEAM)



I was diagnosed with stage 1 lung cancer two days before my 46th birthday in 2022. It was caught during a CT scan for another issue I was having. They just happen to see the bottom of my right lung. The doctor called me in to let me know that they saw something. She said she wasn't sure what it was, but to get checked soon. The doctor had said it possibly could be a collapsed lung or scar tissue. I went to the emergency room to double check if it was a collapsed lung. I was told that there wasn't anything to worry about, so I left for my planned move to Oregon. I did not see a doctor for another year after that, because I had no symptoms. Nothing alerted me, until I got really sick and could not get better.

I went into Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic where they found a tumor on my voice box, which after being removed, came back negative for cancer. When I finally went to see an Oncologist he had gone over my scans and said he didn't think it was anything to worry about, but still wanted to perform a biopsy to make sure. The biopsy results came back positive for cancer - non-small cell Adenocarcinoma Lung cancer. My heart dropped to the floor. I'm a single mother to a young child. The doctor said it was nothing to worry about!

He scheduled me for surgery to remove the bottom of my right lung. He said I was Stage 1 and all I needed was surgery, then I would be good. After the biopsy they performed a PET SCAN. If it lit up, I had cancer in other places. It only lit up on the bottom of my lung. My surgery was May 5, 2022. It was the scariest time in my life, because I had no idea what to expect with this surgery, AND I had to do this alone. I remember waking up with an epidural and a chest tube. It was so painful. My lung had collapsed during surgery. I ended up being in the hospital for 7 days due to complications. On day 5 there my surgeon came in to tell me that they biopsied 10 lymph nodes and 2 came back suspicious. When they got the results back the lymph nodes had cancer. I was immediately advanced to stage 3 lung cancer. It had spread to my lymph nodes and my media sternum.

After surgery, I started chemotherapy and radiation. I was then told I was a candidate for target therapy because I had a gene mutation called Exxon19. I can take this medicine for 3 years to help keep the cancer from coming back. What I am worried about most is NOT the fear of death from cancer, but leaving my kids with nothing. I am a single mother with three kids: Briana, age 29, Rae, age 27, and Syllis age 11. Right before I was diagnosed, I had been in a custody battle for years, finally getting full custody of my youngest. Shortly after the custody battle I was diagnosed with the cancer. I still have not had time to stop and understand I have a limit on my life. Recently, they found a tumor on my shoulder bone, and we are in the process of seeing if it's metastasized to my bones.

I have undergone quite a few treatments of chemotherapy, radiation, and they have removed part of my lung, plus the pain has caused me to be unemployed. The target therapy medicine has severe side

effects as well that hinder my day-to-day life. I haven't even had the space to process my diagnosis. I don't want my son to see me cry nor feel my pain. I just want him to have a normal childhood. I have survived single motherhood, TWICE. I have survived custody battles. Now I keep my faith every day that I will survive this cancer. My Aunt and my 2 closest friends put me in touch with Baron Robison with Kickin' Cancer. Reading the stories of others makes me feel less alone. The power of the community in Kickin' Cancer is inspiring and some of your stories have brought tears to my eyes.

“EVERY DAY IS A GIFT”

GOTEAMSANDY UPDATE 2 YEARS LATER (Q. 2 2022 GOTEAM)

The holidays were extra special in 2023 for Sandy and Jason Thornton, owners of the Grocery Outlet Market in Dallas, Oregon. They have spent the last three years in and out of hospitals as Sandy battled a rare form of cancer called Myelodysplastic Syndrome and Myleo Fibrosis. Before she and her husband opened the new Grocery Outlet store in 2019, she found that she was always tired and sick with colds or other respiratory problems. In July of 2021, it became apparent something was wrong. She couldn't walk before she had to sit down and rest. At Jason's encouragement, she saw a doctor who told her she needed some tests. When she got the results, she learned that there was a real problem. She was told her platelet count was very low at only 14,000. (A normal platelet count in adults ranges from 150,000 to 450,000 platelets per microliter of blood.) “The nurse on the phone told me I had to get to the ER right away and offered to pray with me,” says Sandy Thornton.



The doctors were baffled, telling her she looked too healthy to be sick, but her oncologist advocated for more tests and treatment. She got a red blood transfusion and more platelets, then a blood marrow biopsy. The problem was, her body couldn't hold the platelets. She was also a candidate for experimental treatment. She says she felt like a “lab rat” as she sat in the hospital enduring more treatments. She would ultimately get 55 platelet transfusions and over 25 red blood transfusions.

Eventually, she learned she'd need a stem cell blood transplant because the Fibrosis in her bone marrow would not allow her to produce red blood cells in her body. She had the surgery on January 5, 2022. Once she showed doctors that she could produce her own blood cells and her immunity was increased, she was allowed to go home. She's been in remission since July 2022. Sandy and Jason celebrated Sandy's 2nd birthday on January 5, 2024. They consider this her birthday because it was the day her life was saved. “Every day is a gift. I'm grateful to spend more time with my family and grandkids. I've always loved Christmas, but 2023 has a whole new meaning. I'm more grateful for the small things” says Sandy.

(Editor's note: Jason approached Kickin' Cancer in Nov 2021 and Sandy became Kickin' Cancer's GoTeam... Q. 2 2022. This article came from an American Red Cross newsletter.)

“THE ULTIMATE MIRACLE”

BY LISA BAKER (DEC. 2023 HONOREE)

My journey started in early November 2021 when I noticed some symptoms. I felt tired, had some unexpected weight loss, and my skin was itchy and slightly yellow. My first miracle was early detection, which doesn't often happen with pancreatic cancer, but the tumor grew in such a way that it blocked the bile duct and caused me to become jaundiced. After much nagging from a dear friend I sought medical attention. I went to urgent care and was sent for an emergency CT scan that same day. I was admitted to the hospital for surgery the following day to remove my gallbladder which was the suspected culprit. However, upon waking up from surgery the doctor informed me that they did not remove my gallbladder, because they had found a malignant tumor on the head of my pancreas and had placed a stent in the blocked duct to relieve the jaundice. I was in shock. With everything happening during COVID, I spent the next two days in solitude recovering from surgery and pleading with God.



The next month was a whirlwind of activity and information. I met my oncologist, case management team, palliative care doctor, and surgeon. I had a port placed 3 days before Christmas, more scans and tests, and my first chemotherapy treatment. For me, chemotherapy consisted of 8 hours in the infusion chair followed by 46 hours hooked up to a pump which continued to administer the medication at home. I completed my chemo treatments on June 17, 2022, and the CT scan that followed revealed the treatments had shrunk the tumor enough to allow me to undergo surgery...another miracle.

My surgery was scheduled for August 13, 2022, with the OHSU surgeon who had been with me since my diagnosis. 1 week before surgery, my surgeon called to let me know she had a family emergency and, not wanting to delay my procedure, referred me to a new surgeon at the last minute. In retrospect, yet another of God's miracles. I underwent the Whipple procedure, a complex surgery to remove the head of the pancreas, the first part of the small intestine, the gallbladder and bile duct and, in my case, the lower part of the stomach and a portion of the liver. The Whipple is a difficult and demanding operation and what was anticipated to be a 7-hour surgery turned into a 16-hour affair.

On August 31, 2022, I received the news that I was officially cancer free. The Ultimate Miracle. I will never forget my surgeon standing there telling me all the scientific reasons why people with pancreatic cancer don't experience healing, how it just doesn't happen. I thought in that moment of faith. Sometimes, cancer can be a display case for God's glory.

“BLESSED TO BE ALIVE”

SUBMITTED BY JOHN WRIGHT

In 2018 my doctor told me I was a candidate for early cancer detection screening for cancer. The first one went ok. They found some polyps on my lungs which is normal. Most polyps are non cancerous. The second one, around June 2019 was different. A couple polyps had grown, and it was showing I had chronic COPD. I was then referred to Salem pulmonary for a biopsy of my lung. In the mean time, I started researching lung cancer and what the outcome may be for me. I had no idea what stage it was in, or in fact, if I had cancer. Everything pointing that I did. Cancer runs in my family, but I was not wanting to believe it at the same time. After researching I found there's not many symptoms until its late stage 3 or 4, and by that time it's too late. Most people don't make it.

After getting prepared for the biopsy the doctors told me they

were not convinced it was cancer, so they did a CT scan and sent me home. Now I'm really confused. I don't know if I have cancer or not. After many cancelled appointments I went to my primary physician and told her I was a train wreck. My appointments kept getting cancelled and I'm not sure if I have cancer..She confirmed I did have lung cancer. At that time it all sunk in. I just felt over-whelmed with everything. If I have cancer I just want it removed. She sent me to OHSU in Portland, OR to the Knight Cancer Institute. I met with my surgeon in Feb 2020. We did some lung function test, went over what the game plan was then set appointment for March 17, 2020 to remove a wedge out of my lung where the polyps were. Plus they removed other polyps to be tested for cancer which were negative. At this time no chemo was needed.

July 2020 I went in for another CT scan. Another cancerous polyp showed up. All I could think was, "How is this possible? I thought it was removed. How come this wasn't removed with the others?" In August 2020 I was back in the hospital having the upper lobe of my lung removed, approximately 1/3 of my right lung. In Oct 2020 I started chemo therapy for several months. I just feel blessed to be alive. I strongly believe if it wasn't for early cancer screening I wouldn't be telling my story.

QUARTERLY THOUGHT -

“BUILT FOR ALL, NOT FOR ONE”

BY JILL WARD

The seed for Kickin' Cancer was planted nine years ago when Baron's beloved sister Brenda was diagnosed with cancer. Baron



did what most any loving sibling would do, whatever he could to help her fight the cancer and ease her journey. Then, he went farther. Realizing that Brenda was just one of millions of people around the world fighting cancer, he started a movement, the direction of which at the time was unclear

to him. He just wanted to help people fighting cancer. I have had the privilege of accompanying Baron on much of Kickin' Cancer's journey since then.

GoTeam... was an early idea that mimicked Baron's first efforts to help Brenda. Specifically, we put on events with friends and family to raise money to help with the financial challenges that come with most cancer diagnoses. GoTeam... has survived to this day, as it can make a huge difference in a person's ability to afford the necessary treatments and continue to pay the rent and other bills that are a part of life. It is also a wonderful microcosm of life in general, in that we all do better when we come together to help one another. The most successful GoTeam... projects have been those with the highest involvement of close friends and family. Same as life!

Kickin' Cancer also provides education to help everyone live a better life in ways that also lessen their chances of getting cancer. We create and participate in activities that draw attention to cancer. "Pathways" was the dream child of our Board Chair Robin Paulissen. After a COVID induced delay, is beginning its work in supporting the families of people fighting cancer. She recognized that the families often get left behind, and also need moral support.

Kickin' Cancer will continue to evolve as we see needs and seek to fill them where we are the right organization to do so. And the movement continues!