

My journey started in early October 2014. I located a lump in my right breast that I wanted to have assessed by my family physician, while in for a checkup. He immediately scheduled me for a mammogram/sonogram on October 19, 2014. After the mammogram/sonogram, they immediately scheduled me for a biopsy on October 24, 2014.

After my biopsy was completed, they informed me that I needed to schedule an appointment with a surgeon, and did I know of one that I wanted to use. At that time I did not. In attempting to schedule me with a surgeon that fit within my work schedule, the first one had no times open that would fit my schedule. The second was going to be on vacation and the third there was also a time conflict. On October 30, 2014, I met with a surgeon, who confirmed that I had invasive ductal carcinoma, stage one breast cancer. Upon hearing the news, of course I broke into tears. At that time, the doctor, pulled up a chair next to me and took my hands in his and assured me that he does what he does by God's grace and that he gives thanks to God for giving him the gift of helping people. At that point in time, I knew that God had sent this surgeon to me and that he was the one that was meant to do my surgery. I knew I was in God's hands and that was all that mattered. After my diagnosis, I had to decide how I was going to deliver the news to my youngest son, Allen, who was 17 at the time, and to the rest of my family.

After meeting with doctors from the Regional Cancer Center and my surgeon, we all agreed that a lumpectomy and radiation to follow would be the choice for treatment. On November 14, 2014, I had my lumpectomy and lymph nodes extracted to check for other cancerous sights. Prior to surgery, Mom and Aunt Cathy, my doctor and Pastor Harold all came in and prayed with me. I remember that being a very long day.

Although my lymph nodes tested negative, after my follow up appointment, my doctor informed me that a re-excision had to be done due to the margins still holding cancerous cells. So November 26, 2014, (the day before Thanksgiving) I had my re-excision surgery. After two surgeries, I decided that any kind of treatment would have to wait until after the holidays. In this time, I had to figure out how to break the news to my son, Brady who is serving in the United States Air Force in Okinawa, Japan. The news had to be broken over the phone and was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. During the course of my hiatus from surgeries, the Breast Health Navigator, Linda Brennan (who is now a dear friend), suggested that I get in touch with a group of ladies otherwise known as Linked By Pink. I did so, and was so very glad I did. I met up with Norma in early December, still very fatigued and sore from two surgeries and we talked about what was going on with me and what LBP was all about.

In the meantime while I was healing and celebrating holidays that I really didn't want to be festive about I got some rather unfortunate news again. Due to the results of oncotype tests, RCC doctors were recommending four rounds of chemotherapy be done. So in early January I had yet another surgery to have my medi-port put in and I started chemotherapy on January 12, 2015, and would continue with a treatment every three weeks. After my first chemo treatment, I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but two days after chemo, my hair ended up in my hands while showering and all over my pillowcase. It was a long cold winter, but Mom and my BFF Kim accompanied me to my chemo appointments where many hands of rummy and gin were played and Kim attempted to show me how to crochet. That seemed like the longest haul of my life, but I was thankful to be done with chemo on March 16, 2015.

Early April 2015, I started 25 days of radiation therapy and finished up in late May 2015 and was put on tamoxifen for 5 years. During radiation, blood work showed that my iron levels were dangerously low and so while I was doing radiation, I also had to have iron supplements administered through my port. "Was this ever going to end"? was my question.

Although this has been such a rocky and emotional journey, and still continues to be with the after effects of treatment taking their toll, I have been supported and blessed by so many. From the very beginning my Mom and Dad (Bill) have been a huge support, along with my children, my siblings, my extended family, my BFF Kim, my friends, church family and so many others that a mere "thank you" doesn't seem to be enough. As I continue this journey, I just wanted to extend my gratitude for all who supported me, laughed and cried with me, tended to me when I was sick, and prayed for me and with me. Thank you all for the kind words and cards and overall just for being there when I needed support. Please know that I will truly be forever grateful.

Thank you to all my LBP sisters and for Norma and Becky for running this amazing and much needed group. I have met and connected with so many wonderful women who have endured so much. We each have our own individual story, but if we have to battle cancer, let us do it walking together in support of one another. It has been a true blessing for me and my wishes are that we, as a group, will continue to bless so many in the future.