



*In Memory Of  
Whitney Hardee Cox*

# THINK PINK

*A Product of* **The Manning Times**

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# 3D MAMMOGRAPHY SAVES LIVES

Breast Cancer is the leading cause of cancer among women and early detection significantly influences your chance of survival. The National Cancer Institute recommends that women start having annual mammograms at age 40. At McLeod Health, each of our hospitals offer 3D mammography, the most advanced technology for early detection.

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## McLeod Health

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## Early Detection Utilizing 3D Mammography Improves Survival



At the McLeod Center for Cancer Treatment and Research, our goal is to provide personalized cancer care. We do not look simply at the patient, we also study the tumor to see if they have certain receptors on them so that we can fine-tune, customize and personalize the treatment for each person. One treatment does not fit all -- we individualize it to each and every person.

Dedicated to the early detection and treatment of breast cancer, **McLeod is the only Breast Health Center in the area accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC)**, a program administered by the American College of Surgeons. McLeod received this prestigious acknowledgement of the quality of care it offers to breast cancer patients in 2010 – the first breast program in the region to achieve this designation.

Annually, breast cancer is the most commonly treated cancer at McLeod Regional Medical Center. Because a tremendous volume of breast cancer patients are cared for at McLeod, the hospital, staff, and physicians have put considerable effort into ensuring state-of-the-art care for women with breast cancer and that the NAPBC standards are met or exceeded.

Examples of how McLeod meets and/or exceeds the NAPBC standards include:

- Each week at McLeod, the cases of breast cancer patients are presented at the McLeod Breast Conference which includes at least one attending physician from each of the following departments: medical oncology, radiation oncology, surgery, radiology, and pathology. This ensures that each patient's case is considered from all aspects and in its entirety.
- Every new breast cancer patient treated at McLeod is reviewed by the breast conference.
- Sentinel lymph node biopsy is performed on women with early stage breast cancer.
- Women are considered for and offered entrance into clinical trials and research protocols.
- College of American Pathologists (CAP) guidelines are followed in the treatment of all breast cancer cases.
- Community breast cancer education, prevention, and screening programs are offered in the region.

### 3D Mammography

In 2018, McLeod installed the most accurate mammogram available – 3D Mammography™, at McLeod Regional Medical Center, McLeod Health Dillon and on the McLeod Mobile Mammography Unit. Since that time this technology has

been installed at McLeod Health Cheraw, McLeod Health Clarendon, McLeod Health Seacoast and McLeod Health Loris.

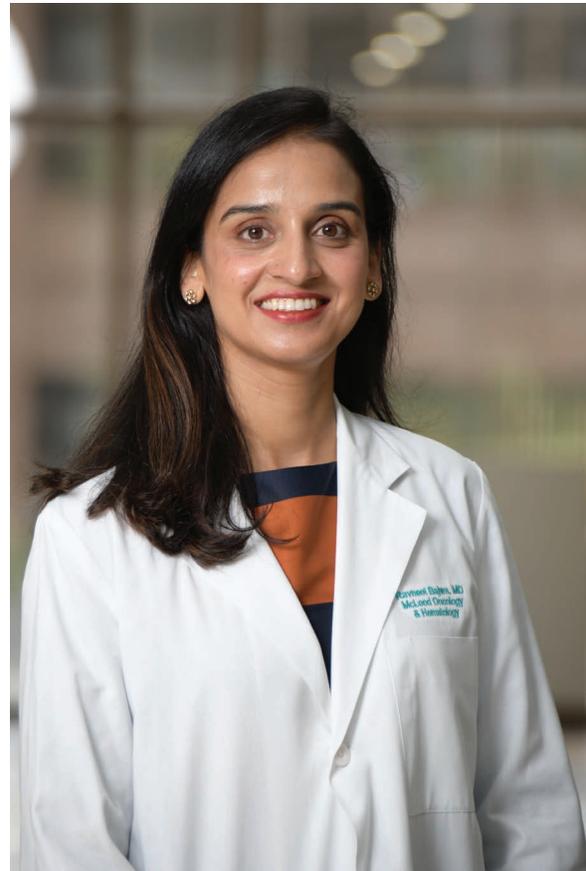
The Genius™ 3D Mammography™ exam revolutionizes how breast cancer is detected by providing a better option for women of all breast densities compared to 2D alone. The technology produces a three-dimensional view that allows doctors to examine breast tissue layer by layer unlike the flat images used in conventional mammograms.

Studies show that the Genius™ 3D Mammography™ exam has greater accuracy than 2D mammography for women across a variety of ages and breast densities. It is also the only mammo-gram that is FDA-approved as superior for women with

dense breasts compared to 2D alone. This is good news for patients, as nearly 50 percent of women between the ages of 40 and 74 have dense breasts.

3D Mammography™ also allows for earlier detection, finding 20 percent to 65 percent more invasive cancers than conventional mammography. In addition, 3D Mammography™ provides greater peace of mind, reducing call back exams by up to 40 percent.

Advancements in early detection with the latest technology and a dedication to ensuring we are meeting and/or exceeding the national standards in breast cancer treatment demonstrates McLeod Health's commitment to improving survival and access to care.



## Ravneet Bajwa, MD McLeod Oncology and Hematology Associates

*Dr. Ravneet Bajwa, a Board Certified Oncologist, cares for patients with Dr. Rajesh Bajaj, Dr. Michael Pavy, Dr. Sreenivas Rao, Dr. Jamie Smith, Dr. Karim Tazi and Dr. Viji Motilal Nehru at McLeod Oncology and Hematology Associates, a division of McLeod Regional Medical Center.*

# The Portrait of a Fighter

*Throughout the month of October, The Manning Times interviewed several women from Clarendon County who have fought the fight, or are presently fighting, against breast cancer. We feel their stories capture the true essence of what it means to be a fighter.*



**M**arlene Hodge was diagnosed with breast cancer in June of 2000. Hodge had previously undergone a yearly physical examination. Marlene felt a lump under her right arm a few days after her physical exam. This was unusual, and Hodge prayed for it to go away, but it did not. Because of her concern about the lump, Marlene scheduled an appointment with her doctor the following Monday. She had two opinions on the fast growing cancer to know for sure it was cancerous.

Hodge's doctor explained that he does not typically diagnose situations like hers and that she would need to speak with a surgeon. She was then referred to a sur-



You have to face your own mortality, it makes you really think about what's going to happen, it draws you a whole lot closer to God."

**— MARLENE HODGE**

geon, who performed a mammogram, which revealed no red flags. It was the biopsy results which came back, and detected the lump was cancerous.

While going through this process and journey, Hodge

expressed that it was a very traumatic experience. Marlene, her father and sister all went to Hodges doctor's appointment to discuss all of the treatment plans.

Marlene had received 4 aggressive chemo treatments. Towards the end of the year in December, Hodge began radiation treatment, totaling 38 treatments.

Being conscious after surgery was a requirement for Hodge; she was very cautious about taking care of herself and her body after

## Marlene Hodge



this surgery. In 2000, Marlene received a mastectomy which removed her entire right breast.

"You have to face your own mortality, it makes you really think about what's going to happen, it draws you a whole lot closer to God," Hodge said when asked about the obstacles and challenges she encountered

along the way with breast cancer.

Hodge has spent the majority of her life as a teacher/high school counselor. Even though she was in the early stages of treatment with chemo and radiation, she continued to work and teach English at Manning High School. Teachers were preparing for and returning to school during Marlene's initial stages of chemo treatment. Hodge had already started preparing and decorating her room for the new school year. It was difficult for her to recover the next day after receiving the second treatment, but she returned the following morning determined to teach and educate her students.

"I always had great support there," Hodge said of her experience working at Manning High School while undoing her life's journey. "The people I worked with were very good to me and my students," Marlene said. "I was very blessed."

Marlene has been cancer free for twenty one years; she still goes to her oncologist every six months for regular visits.

"It is a time when God allows you to pause in order for you to realize how much strength you have." while drawing me closer to God. "I had wonderful support from my family, extended family, and church," Hodge said about her breast cancer experience and journey.

**L**ynn Barth was diagnosed with stage one triple positive breast cancer in the left breast in November of 2018. This is one of the most aggressive types of breast cancer. The cancer was discovered during Barth's manogram; without this mammogram, Barth would not have discovered it herself. Her family has a history of breast cancer, but the rare triple positive cancer has not affected anyone in her family.

"They said it was very aggressive, so if I had found the lump I would have been close

to death," said Lynn.

Lynn made an appointment with the surgeon two days after the 3D mammogram and had a biopsy a few days later. The entire process, especially with this aggressive cancer, was very quick.

"It was very fast. Within two weeks, I was there," said Barth.

Lynn received a year's worth of chemotherapy as well as thirty days of radiation after surgery. It is unusual for patients to receive both at the same time, but due to the aggressiveness of the

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cancer, it was necessary. Throughout his treatment at Santee Hematology & Oncology, Barth received excellent care. Barth would receive three to four treatments every three weeks on average. Everyone at the doctor's office, as well as Lynn's friends, coworkers, and family, were extremely kind and supportive throughout her journey.

This journey has opened Barth's eyes to many things, including the amount of compassion people have and how strong she is.

With the type of



cancer Lynn had, if it were to ever come back, doctors expressed how the cancer could return to the brain.

Barth has been cancer-free since January 30th, 2020. She is tested every three months for tumor counts. She also goes to radiology every six months.

"All of the little things that used to seem big no longer seem big anymore, along with valuing friends and family more,"

Lynn said when asked how this experience has shaped her into the person she is today.

"I told myself I needed to get this checked out," Alfreda explained.

The lump was actually fatty tissue, but there was a cancerous mass in the right breast. Johnson was unaware

**Alfreda Johnson**



of the mass in her breast, so when she had a biopsy, she was told it was cancer.

Johnson did not have to receive radiation or chemotherapy through her journey as a cancer overcomer.

Alfreda described how her doctor explained to her how the Lord took care of her because she was able to avoid radiation and chemotherapy.

All of Johnson's surgeries were performed at Tuomey Regional Medical Center by her doctor, Henry Moses. This was especially useful given that Sumter, SC is very close and not a long drive away for Alfreda.

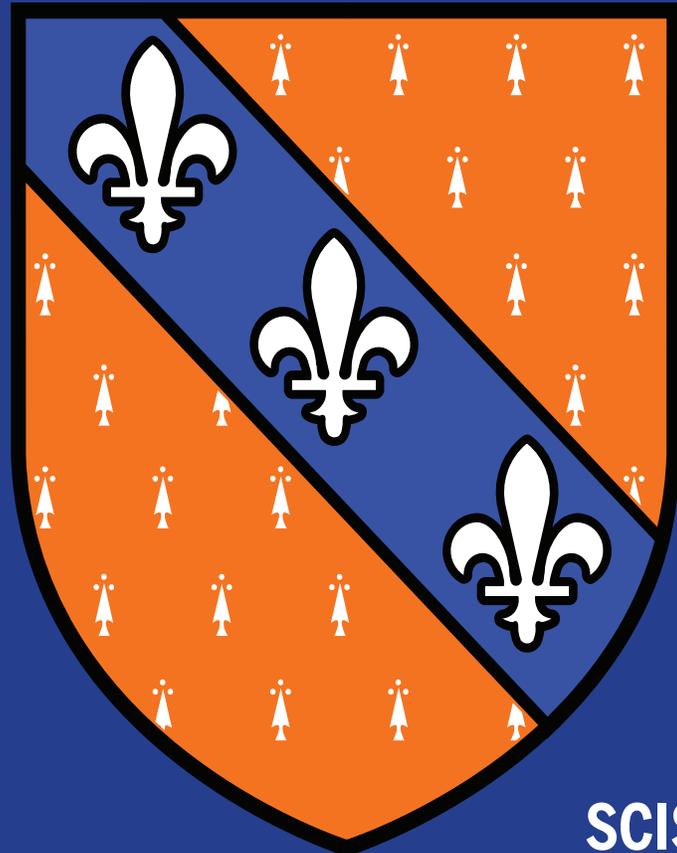
"The doctors were so caring and were always rooting for me," said Johnson.

Johnson explained that her experience at Tuomey with the doctors and staff was amazing, and she could definitely feel each of them's compassion and love for their patients.

Johnson had a lumpectomy, but the procedure was unsuccessful and she had to undergo surgery in December to have her breast removed. The doctors initially underestimated the size of the mass; it was the size of a baseball, which was larger than they had anticipated. Following the surgery,

**A**lfreda Johnson was diagnosed with stage one breast cancer in November of 2010. Johnson

was the first to notice the cancer. She became aware of a lump above her right breast.



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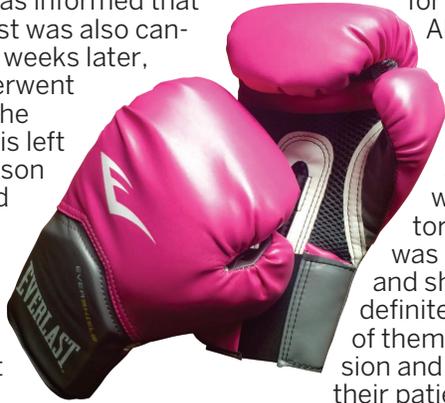
Alfreda began reconstruction surgery. Johnson underwent breast reduction surgery for her left breast the following year, with the goal of making the left breast more symmetrical to the right breast. Johnson was requested to come to the office following her breast reduction surgery, where she was informed that her left breast was also cancerous. Two weeks later, Alfreda underwent surgery for the removal of his left breast. Johnson was declared cancer-free after undergoing surgery on both her right and left breasts.

"My faith in God has kept me going. I walk by faith and not by sight," said Alfreda. Johnson explained that her faith in God has gotten her this far in life. Alfredo has had many surgeries in her life in addition to her breast cancer surgeries. She has had

over a dozen surgeries.

All of Johnson's surgeries were performed at Tuomey Regional Medical Center by her doctor, Henry Moses. This was especially useful given that Sumter, SC is very close drive for Alfreda.

"The doctors were so caring and were always rooting for me," said



Alfreda Johnson explained that her experience at Tuomey with the doctors and staff was amazing, and she could definitely feel each of them's compassion and love for their patients.

Johnson's family, friends and ministry have been extremely helpful and supportive throughout her breast cancer journey. Many family members offered Alfreda the opportunity to stay at their homes while caring for her. Alfreda declined those

kind gestures because she mentioned how she needed to get used to the challenges. Alfreda taught in Clarendon School District 2 for over fifteen years. From 2000 to 2003, she was a teacher at Manning Elementary. She worked at Manning Junior High School from 2003 to

2010, after three years at Manning Elementary. Finally, she worked at Manning High School from 2010 to 2015 before retiring in June of 2015.

Johnson has been cancer-free for over eleven years and is a breast cancer survivor/overcomer as of 2021.

Chelia Frank, 36, was diagnosed with breast cancer on May 26th, 2021.

Frank first started to notice her breasts were swollen and she was experiencing pain in the breast area. Chelia didn't jump to the conclusion that she had breast cancer right away; she knew something wasn't right but assumed it was a hormonal issue, so she waited it out. Chelia gave herself a self exam and still felt unsure about the

came to mind," Frank explained.

Chelia was having back-to-back appointments every day after receiving the devastating news and dealing with new challenges along the way. Chelia had previously received chemo, but she was taken off of it due to the chemo causing neuropathy in her hands and feet.

Chelia has an incredible support system, ranging from her mother and father, who have been her number one supporters since birth, to her fiancé, sister, and friends. They have all contributed to her assistance in a variety of ways, such as driving her to appointments and other tasks while she fights this battle. While Frank was at an appointment, she met another survivor who was also battling breast cancer. They struck up a conversation, and the lady was actually a member of a support group called the Stay Strong ministry. The lady obtained Frank's contact information and encouraged her to join the group of other cancer survivors.

Chelia Frank



feeling and made an appointment with her family doctor in Sumter, SC. The family doctor Frank usually sees said it could be hormonal, but she would need an ultrasound to be certain. About a week later, Chelia received the ultrasound. The nurse who performed the ultrasound on Chelia was also aware that it would be best for Chelia to have a monogram the same day. Approximately two days after Frank's ultrasound and monogram appointment, she received a call from one of the nurses who informed her she would need to speak with a breast cancer surgeon doctor. The doctor informed her they had a mass, so it was necessary for them to have a biopsy. It was then confirmed Chelia had stage 2 invasive ductal carcinoma cancer.

"Everything stopped, my head went straight to death, that was the first thing that

"The biggest thing I have discovered is the best support you can have is from someone who has walked down that road or is currently walking down that road," said Frank.

Joining this support group in June of 2021 has totally and utterly helped Chelia with this battle and journey.

"Dealing with breast cancer is a major change in your life," Frank said. "You realize how many things you used to be able to do that you can't do now to some degree," said Chelia.

Chelia's advice to other breast cancer patients "At times, it may feel like the biggest test of your faith, but as long as you pray and stay positive, this is only a task that I promise will turn into your testimony," Chelia Frank said.

Chelia is still battling breast cancer and will receive surgery on November 4th, 2021.



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# The Journey: This Thing Called Cancer



by Rebekka Taylor  
thejourney4036@gmail.com

If you are a monthly subscriber to The Manning Times (which I hope you are), you are already familiar with what I call "The Journey" - this thing called cancer. What I share here is something you might not know - the struggle, the strength, and everything in between. It started for me a little over one year ago. I found a painful lump in my right breast while in the shower one evening. Being a teacher and with school getting ready to start, I brushed it off and self-diagnosed a pulled muscle as a result of working in my classroom all summer to make sure desks were six feet apart. A



month went by, and the lump grew larger in size and was much more painful. When I finally called a friend who is a nurse, she said I needed to be seen right away. The examinations began, the tests were run, and after being poked and prodded by what seemed like one hundred people, the diagnosis came: Metastatic, Stage 3 Breast Cancer. I was two weeks shy of turning thirty-nine and my world was turned upside down.

The first person outside my medical team to know what was happening was my friend, Jen. I went straight to her boutique downtown after leaving the hospital. I couldn't call my husband while he was at work - what would I say? "Hey, Babe! I know you're probably driving, but I wanted to let you know I'm dying." That wouldn't have been good! So, there I sat, in my friend's little office waiting for my doctor to call and explain

everything. Jen was great - she had her spiral notebook and pencil ready to take notes when I answered the call on speakerphone. "Am I dying?" That was my first question. "Will I lose my hair?" That was my second question. After the initial shock wore off and the first tears were dried, Jen said, "You know, I always thought I'd be that friend who would shave her head in support of a friend going through chemo. I just realized I am NOT that friend." We laughed so hard, we cried again.

That evening, my husband and I sat on our front porch and talked for a very long time. It's probably the

longest conversation we'd had in almost twelve years. (When you have three boys to raise, there is very little time for one-on-one conversations of any length!) Suddenly, we found ourselves

trying to navigate the most violent storm we'd ever encountered. Matt and I had already experienced a lot in our marriage: the death of a baby, major surgery, job changes, the deaths of our grandparents, the death of a dear friend, moving to Manning, etc. We made a decision that night and I am convinced it is the reason I'm writing this today; we decided to give God the glory, no matter the outcome. We decided to show our children what they heard us talk about - we were going to walk in love.

I met with Dr. James Smith at McLeod October 5, 2020. My port for chemotherapy had been placed the week prior. I was ready to take action. I was ready

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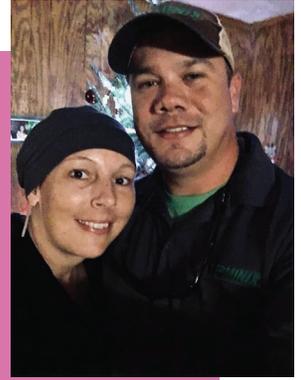
to fight. He looked at my scans, ordered more, looked at my bloodwork, ordered more, and created my treatment plan. During one of my scans, not only did my breast cancer show, but also a "suspicious spot" on my thyroid. I was scheduled to begin chemotherapy October 12th and was scheduled for a thyroid biopsy two days later. At this point, I had been in a doctor's office of some sort every weekday for about three weeks straight. Matt and I had



already spoken with the administrative team at Laurence Manning Academy to let them know I wouldn't be back until after Christmas to teach. We had already talked to our boys and tried to explain cancer to a then four-year-old, six-year-old, and eleven-year-old. We told our parents. We called friends to let them know. Our social media announcement had been made. The phones rang constantly. The letters and cards started filling the mailbox. The world was spinning faster, but we were going to beat cancer together!

Cancer is lonely, but cancer with a global pandemic is even more lonely. I was scheduled for thirteen rounds of chemotherapy at three-week intervals. I wasn't able to drive myself to these appointments, but I couldn't have anyone go inside the hospital with me. My family worked it out to take turns driving me to chemo and doctor's appointments so Matt

could work and not miss the hours. Our household income had just taken a major hit and we needed him to work. My mom, dad, stepmom, and little brother drove me to Florence and sat in the parking garage while cancer-killing liquid was sent coursing through my veins for six hours at a time. I know it sounds horrible, and it was, but there was also a lot of "good" found during that time. I met some amazing people who will forever hold a special place in my heart. As I type this, I smile thinking of them and the impact they had on my life during one of the darkest times. One of the ways I combated the loneliness was to write a column for The Manning Times. Through that column, I felt like I was still connected somehow. I wanted people to know that I was fighting, and that God is good! I wanted the people in our community to understand how much my family appreciated their



prayers and support. I wanted love to get the spotlight and "Cancer Chronicles" did just that.

After chemotherapy ended and I got to ring that glorious bell, I thought we were surely at the "easy part." Little did I know, that with cancer, there is no such thing! Surgery was scheduled to remove the remaining tumor and lymph nodes that had cancer cells in them. Recovering from surgery was important so I could begin the thirty rounds of ra-

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diation as soon as possible. Radiation would consist of driving to Florence, Monday through Friday, for six weeks starting in April. (Right about the time gas prices skyrocketed, wouldn't you know it!) This is when I had to face the facts: I wasn't going to be able to return to my classroom that year. My heart was completely broken. Up until this point, I was fighting with a strength that was not my own and doing everything in my power to get back to "normal" for my husband, my children, and my students. When I was a child, my precious grandma, Polly, would say, "Just sit pretty, now." I was never really good at "sitting pretty" and now I was being made to. I'm also very stubborn and I don't like anyone making me do anything. I enjoy living life with a purpose. I thrive on being intentional and helping others. As I expressed all of this frustration to a friend who had recently battled cancer, he said,

"Rebekka. It's tough, but you have to remember to trust the process." I had to mentally remind myself each day to find the good. It became my mission to find something good in each day; whether it be the opportunity to take a nap or a good report from the lab.

When I rang the bell after completing radiation, it was the end of the school year. Plans for the following year needed to be made. It was evident I wouldn't have the energy to teach elementary grades; it wouldn't be fair to the students to have a teacher who was too tired to play games with them. The only positions left to be filled were those which would not provide enough income for our family's mounting bills. While trying to figure out finances, we found out there were some stubborn cancer cells still lingering around and I would need to undergo twelve rounds of a different kind of chemotherapy, given in



three-week intervals like the last chemo. My friend, Amber, offered me a job at her pool store as the office manager. I explained that I didn't know the first thing about pools... I can't even swim! She insisted that she needed the help and I knew we needed the income, so changing jobs would have to be the answer. The hours would be flexible enough to allow for treatment and doctor's appointments and I would still be able to con-

tribute to our family financially. This was the good I needed! People often ask me what the hardest thing about battling cancer is. My answer to that question, as simply as I can put it, is that the world continues spinning while you are at a standstill. Everyone continues living their lives, while yours is still upside-down. People your age are settled in and comfortable, while your family is living on the edge. It's strange to watch your



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children deal with your mood swings as if it's a normal part of life. It gets very quiet when the only thing you and your spouse talk about is cancer because that's what dictates every decision that is made.

I wish more people would ask me what the best thing about cancer is. My answer wouldn't be so simple as the previous one. The best thing about cancer is the good I've found along the way. The good security officer who meets me at the door of the hospital, who danced with me in the hallway after radiation, who asks me if my son's fishing team weighed in at the tournament, who always says he's thankful to be in the number for that day. The good doctor who listens to my crazy questions, who reassures me that I'm not completely insane, who tells me that one day I won't have to see him for a whole month! The nurse who administers my chemo, who talks about her grandchildren, who calms my anxiety about needles, who hugs me before I leave. The good volunteer who smiles as she pushes her cart of snacks, who always offers a blanket, who says she's glad to see you, who gives you a can of Coke even though your eyeballs are already floating from the fluids. The good friends who always answer the phone, who love you even when you sound like a lunatic, who come to your house to paint pumpkins on a school night, who take you out to celebrate your fortieth birthday because cancer didn't win

this year, who make you laugh every single day, who help you find the good. The good sons who forgive you for not keeping promises, who do their chores and some extra, who let me take a nap, who learn new things daily. The good husband who lets me cry whenever I want to, who lets me be weak, who holds me up when I can't stand on my own, who still looks at me with love when he has more hair than I do, who works hard daily to provide for our family while holding us together, who worries more than he lets show.

We are now at the point in "The Journey" where I have only four chemo treatments left. Since you typically don't die from thyroid cancer, we haven't begun to tackle that issue yet. Once we get the breast cancer taken care of, I'll have another surgery to remove my thyroid completely. There will be immunotherapy and medicines to balance out, but I will continue to find the good each day. Over the last year, I have learned that there will always be challenges and changes. I have learned the true character of God and that He is love. I have realized that "normal" is nonexistent. I have discovered that I am stronger than I thought and much more stubborn than I care to admit. I have learned to enjoy "The Journey" and not let anyone tell me how to travel this road. I will travel it with grace. I will travel it with dignity. I will travel and shout aloud the praises of a God who loves me more than I could ever imagine.

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## The Portrait of a Fighter

*Throughout the month of October, The Manning Times interviewed several women from Clarendon County who have fought, or are presently fighting, against breast cancer. We feel their stories capture the true essence of what it means to be a fighter.*



Pat Fenters was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997. Fenters underwent several biopsies in order to diagnose the cancer. After numerous negative blood scans, doctors performed another biopsy on Fenters, which revealed that she had breast cancer. Fenters felt the bad news right away when the nurses wanted Fenters and her husband to return to the office and speak with the doctor in person for the results.

"I knew this wasn't going to be good news because the nurse wouldn't tell me my results," said Pat "I felt like if it was good news, they would have told me over the phone."

Fenters had a feeling the



**I truly think when someone comes face to-face with their mortality, it makes them a better person. I now appreciate all of the little things, "**

**— PAT FENTERS**

results would be positive. Fenters describes how you hear about people getting cancer all the time and are aware that it could happen to you. But until you're in that situation and position, you never really imagine it happening to you.

"I truly think when someone comes face to-face with their mortality, it makes them a better person. I now appreciate all of the little things, " said Pat.

After receiving the news of having cancer, the doctors moved toward getting rid of the cancer in her left breast. Fenters decided she would want to remove the whole breast and had a Mastectomy. They found no remaining cancer after the surgery, and the surgeon told Fenter that she could have chemo if she wanted, but it would not increase her chances of it spreading elsewhere, as far as they could tell. Fenters chose not to have chemo or radiation. Following her surgery, she was cancer-free. Twenty years later Pat discovered a lump in her right breast. She scheduled a consultation with her gynecologist. Her gynecologist expressed concern about her getting an appointment with a surgeon. Pat went to MUSC in Charleston, SC to see a surgeon after her gynecologist recommended them. The lump in her right breast was cancerous, and Fenters was diagnosed with breast cancer for the second time; this was not a recurrence of her first cancer. This was a completely different type of cancer. When doing the biopsy, fenters remembered years ago being put to sleep. When she experienced her biopsy for the second time, having cancer, the process had changed and they did not put her to sleep. This process was not painful, Pat described. Fenters came to the conclusion that she would want to remove the whole breast again and have another mastectomy for the right breast. Like mentioned before, for the first time since having cancer, she did not have to undergo chemo

or radiation treatments. But for the second time, Pat had cancer, and she did have to receive radiation treatment. Fenters wanted reconstruction on her right breast because she had been through the reconstruction process before with her left. The plastic surgeon expressed that she would have to wait until her radiation is complete and then they would move forward with the reconstruction part. After the radiation and reconstruction, Pat had an infection in the right breast. The infection was toward the breast bone. The surgeon expressed his concern with the fact the implant would have to come out. The surgeon was unclear if Pat would ever be able to have an implant after the infection. Fenters urged the surgeon to take out both implants. She wouldn't want to keep one while leaving the other asymmetrical. Her surgeon explained about a tram flap surgery which transfers a section of abdominal muscle, as well as fat and skin, to the chest. Pat did receive this surgery.

"It was a tough surgery, but now that it's behind me, it's okay," said Fenters.

Fenters and her surgeon were able to get the infection out. Pat has been fully cancer free since her second surgery and has been released from all of her doctors and surgeons. It was a long and difficult battle, but this experience and journey have shaped Pat into the strong woman she is today.



**A**s a teenager Maggie Conyers noticed a small lump in her left breast. "I noticed it as a teenager and would tell my doctors about it but they said it was normal." At fifty-one years old in 1986 Conyers had the lump biopsied and found out it was not normal but in fact, it was breast cancer. "I was devastated that day, but not because of the cancer diagnosis, I had prayed about that with my husband and knew I would be okay, we prayed about it before the biopsy so I was a peace with my diagnosis." Conyers was devastated that day because one of her sons was killed the same day of her biopsy and diagnosis. After having surgery Conyers did not need any additional radiation or chemotherapy.

Then seventeen years later in 2003, Conyers was again diagnosed with breast cancer, this time in her left breast. "My family, my sons, and I all prayed about it, and again I knew I was going to be okay



**My biggest obstacle with both diagnoses was not the cancer, I was not fearful of that, it was the loss of my son."**

**— MAGGIE CONYERS**

and God would take care of it," said Conyers. "I believe families that pray together, stay together." Again Conyers underwent a mastectomy and again she did not need any additional treatment.

"My biggest obstacle with both diagnoses was not the cancer, I was not fearful of that, it was the loss of my son."

Conyers does have a history of breast cancer with both of her sisters

having had the disease as well. "I hope and pray that my story will be a blessing for someone who may be going through a cancer diagnosis."

**M**any residents in Clarendon County know Annette Smith from her role serving in the Clarendon County's Sheriff's office for the last twenty seven years, what many may not know is all the selfless hours of work that she has done behind the scenes helping breast cancer survivors in Clarendon County. About three years ago the decision was made for the county to no longer participate in the national Relay For Life fundraiser but to instead do something on a more local basis.

This is when Smith stepped up and began the Clarendon County Overcomers Foundation. "Once the board was in place we took off." Smith hosts several different fundraisers

throughout the year to raise donations. The monies raised goes to local men and women fighting this dreaded disease. The money can be used for help paying for their treatment, hotel room to stay

**Annette Smith**



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in while they are undergoing treatment if out of town, food or gas to get to the treatment.

"I started working on raising donations and awareness for breast cancer many years ago, when I was a School Resource Officer." "My mother in law had breast cancer but I remember we were not really allowed to talk about it, then I had an Aunt pass away due to Breast Cancer. " Smith participated as a Relay for Life captain for many years pour-



**It just give me joy. I am just happy to help raise the money and keep it in the county and take care of our people, that means the most to me."**

**— ANNETTE SMITH**

ing her heart into fundraising and advocacy for cancer patients, survivors and the family members and friends affected.

One of the events that the Overcomers group hosts is the Think Pink event. This event provides dinner, gift bags, fundraising and door prizes. "This is the tenth year for me doing Think Pink and everyone is so great and giving." Another event the group did was The Run Walk or Golf cart in Pink Sneakers event on October second, held at Manning High School. "I held this event outside due to the current pandemic and many of our survivors have compromised immune systems."

**N**ina Fuller was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004. She was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer, which blocks certain vessels in the skin covering the breast. The breast becomes red, swollen, and tender. With other symptoms, including a rapid change in the breast. When Fuller first discovered this, doctors assumed it

"All my co-worker's at the sheriff's office donated, Sheriff Baxley cooked 650 chickens, Steve McKenzie from Coffey and McKenzie Law firm purchased us a pink tent for the event, Wal-Mart donated 300 cup cakes and I personally put together over 400 treat bags." The event sold 250 tickets and the survivors were given t-shirts and dinner.

"This county is amazing, every organization, business and individual person I go to and ask for something for the overcomers group tells me yes, no one says no." Smith's personal motto is give God all the honor and glory, her favorite scripture is Proverbs 16:3- "Commit whatever you do to the Lord and he will establish your vision." "The Lord has really established my vision thru the Overcomers group, Think Pink is my passion."

Smith is currently working on Pink Care Packages. "These are packages for anyone currently undergoing cancer treatment; I try to include puzzles, word search books, journals and things of that nature so while they are receiving treatment the patient has something to keep them busy."

Last year, because of COVID-19 we did a Survivors Book instead of gathering together and raised over ten thousand dollars. Currently the Overcomer's mailing list has over 215 survivors but is increasing weekly.

"It just give me joy. I am just happy to help raise the money and keep it in the county and take care of our people, that means the most to me."

was a skin problem rather than cancer. After Fuller was prescribed antibiotics and returned to the doctor, she was referred to have an exam because the medicines did not fix the issue. Fuller's cancer was extremely aggressive, and it spread extremely quickly. The process was extremely fast following the exam on fuller's right breast. She had the right breast

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cancer fully removed. Following chemotherapy, she received radiation for thirty-three days. She received her treatment in Sumter, SC.

"The staff was great and took care of me; everything was great," said Fuller.

Fuller had many family and friends supporting her throughout these difficult times.

"They did a great job being

else until she was able to regain her strength and return to work full-time.



**[My son] was the only thing that put me in the positive state I needed to survive. [You have to] Find a focus point and focus on what will get you through it."**

— **Nina Fuller**

**Nina Fuller**



"It's hard when you're trying to survive and it's going through your head if you're going to survive," said Fuller.

Throughout her journey, the only thing she remembers vividly during those trying times was her son. She knew she had to come out stronger to watch her son grow up, given the fact that he was only ten years old.

"That was the only thing that put me in the positive state I needed to survive,"

Fuller explained. Fuller has been cancer-free since 2005 and has continued to run her business since her diagnosis of being clear.

"Find a focus point and focus on what will get you through it," Fuller said when asked what advice she would give to others going through the breast cancer journey.

by my side," said Fuller.

Fuller had a dog named Teddy who was her companion and stuck with her throughout her journey.

Fuller, the owner of the Dog House in Manning, SC, had to put the majority of her life on hold due to the amount of treatment and therapy she received during her diagnosis. Fuller had her business run by someone

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**P**am Buddin received a breast cancer diagnosis in October of 2002.

Buddin discovered a lump in her breast. She underwent a biopsy for a benign lump. During the biopsy, they discovered the malignancy, which was cancerous. Buddin's breast was found to be cancerous, according to the doctors.

"I was pretty much numb and didn't hear anything after he said that," said Buddin, "The only thing I could think of was that my children are nine and thirteen."

Buddin decided to have a lumpectomy on the cancerous breast to remove the

malignancy. The surgeons were able to proceed with the lumpectomy because

**Pam Buddin**



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no other cancerous spots were discovered. They also removed a number of lymph nodes. Unfortunately, a trace was found on two of Buddin's lymph nodes, requiring an aggressive treatment plan for Buddin's journey. Buddin chose to receive her chemotherapy treatment at South Carolina Oncology. Buddin was supposed to receive eight chemo treatments, but due to the negative impact it had on her body and mental state, she only received six. Buddin also had radiation treatment, which she received at a doctor's office in Sumter, South Carolina.

"They were absolutely amazing and wonderful," said Buddin.



**"I was pretty much numb and didn't hear anything after he said that. The only thing I could think of was that my children are nine and thirteen."**

— Pam Buddin

She was scheduled for thirty-three radiation treatments, but the doctors increased that number to thirty-nine to ensure positive results. The radiation treatment and process was a much better experience for Buddin. She was finally starting to get her strength up. The journey of recovering took Buddin around a year to fully gain her strength for all the activities Buddin was

adapted to before her journey with cancer.

Buddin was teaching eighth grade at Clarendon School District Two at the time, and received therapy every day after school. Buddin did not let this discourage her from working; she worked every day and only missed about twenty-five days.

"My students were absolutely amazing during that time," said Buddin.

Buddin usually chose to have her treatments on Fridays so she could recover over the weekend, and after her first treatment, she was able to return to school the next Monday. When the sixth treatment approached, it really took its toll on Buddin's body, and she missed a week of school.

"I was just so weak, I tried to go back to work and I only made it past the office to the cafeteria and had to go home," Buddin explained.

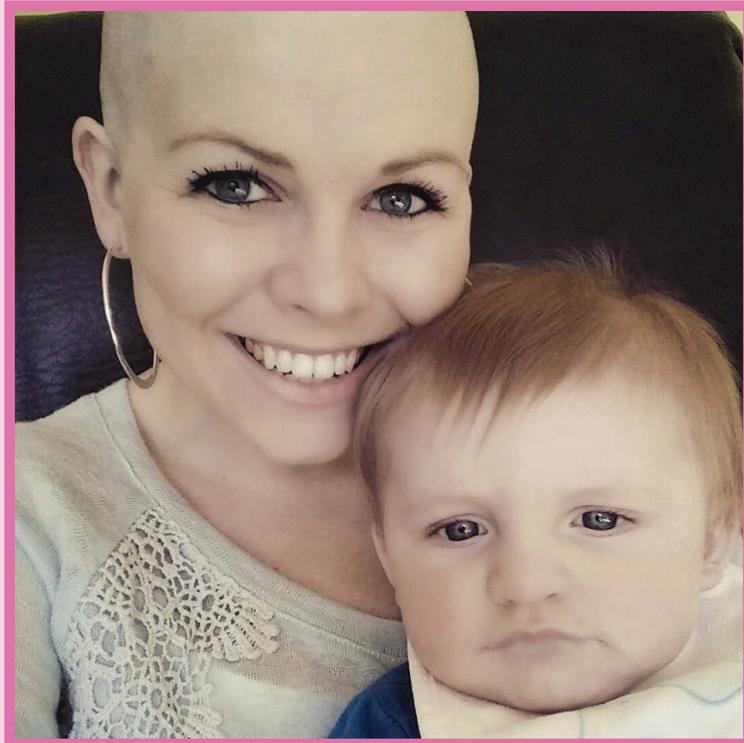
Buddin is extremely thankful for her colleagues and students throughout those difficult times in her journey.

"It was a terrifying ordeal not being able to go and do things I normally do," said Buddin. Throughout the process, it was critical for Buddin not to disrupt her children's routines; when they became concerned, Buddin simply told them to pray.

"Never go to an appointment alone, go to a doctor you feel most comfortable with and have confidence in. Continue in your routines as much as possible and life," is advice Buddin gives to others going through breast cancer.



# This Little Light of Mine



## *In Memory Of Whitney Hardee Cox*

*"Whitney Hardee Cox, 28, [...] died Sunday, Jan. 10, 2016, at her parent's home, surrounded by her family. She lived life to the fullest and enjoyed spending time outdoors, shopping, taking pictures, decorating and, most of all, spending time with her family, especially her children. Whitney enjoyed sharing her [fight against breast cancer] through social media; her blog, "This Little Light of Mine"; and speaking at different churches. She always encouraged others to let their light shine for Christ regardless of their circumstances."*

*Thus begins the obituary for the beloved Cox, someone who's life touched several citizens throughout Clarendon County and beyond. Her blog, "This Little Light of Mine," was shared frequently via a column in The Manning Times before her unfortunate passing in 2016. For this, our first ever Breast Cancer Awareness magazine, we have decided to feature a handful of these stories, as told by Whitney.*



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**The day I found out I have cancer**

I was on the way to a routine obgyn visit. I had a few days off and I'd been in and out of the doctor's office anyway for nausea, fatigue, and a lump I found after the Christmas church service. I was scheduled for a biopsy the following week and things seemed to be moving pretty slowly. I thought about it all the time, wondering what could be wrong inside of me. I did my research and knew there was a possibility that it was cancer. I never focused on cancer though. I'm only 27, cancer doesn't really run in my family. I've always been healthy. I just had a baby! My bloodwork was fine.

I brought up how I'd been feeling to my obgyn, Dr. Martha, and she immediately took action. She noticed my liver felt enlarged and sent me to the hospital for a cat scan. After a few hours at the hospital I was sent back to my obgyn's office for them to discuss the results with me. Dr. Martin, my doctor who delivered Luke, came into the room and immediately my red flags flew up. He sat down across from me and told me how hard it was for him to tell me what

and broke down. They kept passing the phone back and forth, scurrying about. They immediately came to me. I called my husband, Patrick, at work. All he could do was repeat "there's no way, it can't be." Of course he was just as shocked as I was.

I met with Dr. Martin's recommended surgeon who was very optimistic. He was certain it was Hodgkins lymphoma and I was going to be just fine. I'd have my biopsy the next day. I rode home, not sure how I felt. I was just thankful that nobody gave me a number. I was going to live, that was the most important thing to me. I never felt bitter towards God. I trust him completely. If anything, it was a wake up call. He needed my attention. He certainly has it now!

**The day they gave me a number**

I was very optimistic about Hodgkins. My age, symptoms, swollen lymph nodes, it all fit. There was no doubt in my mind I was going to survive this- no problem. I had never been put to sleep before, and yet all of a sudden doctors were putting me under every other day it seemed for a biopsy or procedure. I came to like it, actually. I knew in just a minute I wouldn't be feeling any pain. I just wanted to sleep. The pain in my back had been excruciating from tumors pressing on nerves and whatever else. Praise God that pain is almost nonexistent on most days!! (Hello, miracle.) I got so sick, a reaction from the pain medicine, I lost almost 15 lbs in 2 weeks. But the cure rate for Hodgkins is wonderful and I didn't let any of that get me down. Well, we found out it wasn't Hodgkins. When we finally met my oncologist, my parents, brother, and Patrick were all with me. She came in and informed us that they weren't sure about where this cancer originated from yet, but it is very aggressive and fast spreading. It is in my liver, lungs, and lymph nodes. She says it is stage 4 and it's

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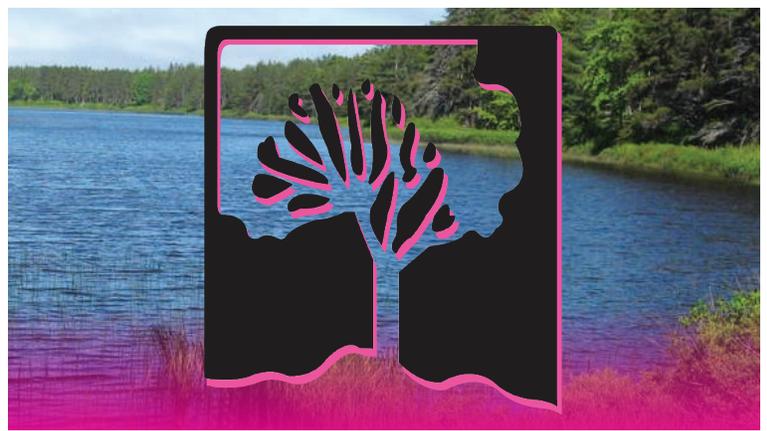
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he had seen. My cat scan was very discouraging. My abdomen was full of tumors. He said it had to be cancer. I felt the tears start, then stop as I went back into shock. How do I tell my husband this? My parents? They were all waiting on the results from the scan. Dr. Martin asked if I would like him to pray with me. I said yes and he did. How wonderful, to have a doctor who will pray with you! I went to my car, called my parents,



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treatable, but not curable. I broke. I was scared. I cried. Patrick held me as he cried.



**All I could say was “I don’t want to die.” A million things could have run through my mind, but all I saw were my children. I am not leaving them. I will beat these numbers.”**

That’s when the question of “how much time am I going to lose from this?” came up. Six months or less without chemo. Five years is very optimistic with the chemo. My poor parents, Ryan, Patrick. All I could say was “I don’t want to die.” A million things could have run through my mind, but all I saw were my children. I am not leaving them. I will beat these numbers. God knows my heart and he knows my desire to stay with my family. I believe he will give that to me and I will forever glorify His name because of this. I don’t think about dying now. My faith is strong and God has given me peace. The sickness, probably losing my hair, all of that- I will take gladly! Because I’m going to live.

**For better or for worse**

For better or for worse... in sickness and in health. We never thought we would be facing any serious health issues after only 6 years of marriage. I am so thankful that God gave me such a great husband to support me in this battle. When I get down he lifts me right back up. He is so sure of me. So sure I’m going to beat this. So thank you heavenly Father, for the blessing of my marriage!

**No hair, no worries!**

I’ve gotta say, having a bald head feels pretty good! And it sure saves me a lot of time in the morning. I still shock myself a little when I walk by the mirror. But I am so relieved

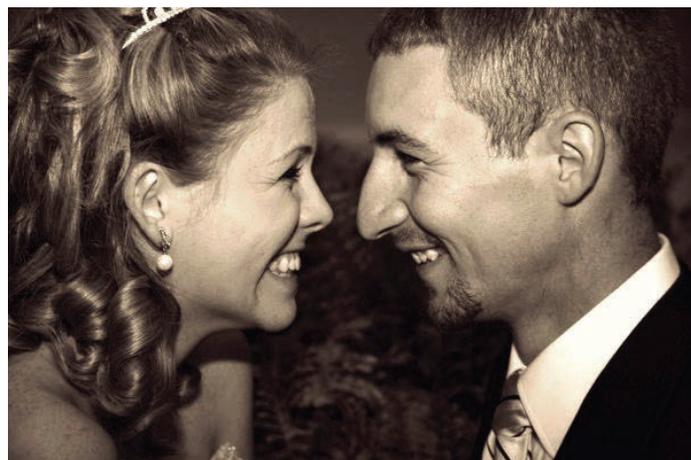
that I didn’t wake up to a pile of hair on my pillow. That’s the part that upset me, watching it come out in my hands. This is much easier than I thought it would be. I was planning on getting a wig as soon as possible after having my head shaved. I mentioned this to my husband the other night and he asked me “why?” Well, I didn’t really have an answer for that. After all, it’s what’s on the inside that really matters. Who cares if I’m bald? Who cares if it’s a little more obvious that I’m a cancer patient? I’m not ashamed. So no wig for me! Come as you are.

**Searching...**

I went out to dinner with my husband last night. After all that crazyness I think we’ve decided next Valentine’s day we will stay in! I finally found a couple of hats that fit my tiny head at the mall. On the way home, I was thinking about life before cancer. Not even two short months ago. No one really knew, besides Patrick and my parents, but I was pretty unhappy. On the outside, to everyone else, I was happy. On the inside I was searching. Something in my life was lacking. I let it drag me down every day, usually when I got home in the evenings. I was looking for something that I didn’t even know what I was looking for. It took cancer to open my eyes. I needed to give more time to God. I needed to PRAY and READ his word. I needed to LISTEN and let Him



guide me on a daily basis. I needed to get back in church,



and most importantly make sure my babies were there. I needed to THANK HIM for all the blessings he’s bestowed upon me. I needed to have more FAITH. I took my life for granted! All these little things that we stress about on a daily basis...OH they are NOTHING. Don’t let them ruin your day. Cherish your family and cherish your TIME on this earth. Cherish your health. We are not promised tomorrow.

**What I want people to get from my testimony.**

Sooo I’m thinking (sometimes this is dangerous lol). And I ask myself “What do I want people to get from my testimony?”

First and foremost, I want people to share my faith in God. There is so much ugliness going on in the world right now, and we need Him more than ever!! I want people to know the power of prayer. I cried out to God and he gave me the courage, strength, and peace I need to get through this battle! He heard my prayers and he gave me answers. I want people to realize how precious life is and how quickly it can be taken away from us. I want them to value their time on this earth with their families. I want them to hug their children a little tighter. I want them to believe in miracles, because I will get my miracle. You will see! I feel it in my bones. If I’m getting this across to you, then I am doing what I believe God wants

me to do. And it makes this battle worth the fight. This is my blessing. I am blessed!

A lady who works at Belk in Georgetown touched my heart so good today! She came around the counter and held me and prayed for me. She declared that my next scan will show that I am clean! I’ve been claiming healing over my body from the beginning of this, but so soon? Why not? I’m claiming it! My next scan will show no cancer. Nothing is too big for my God!

**Make those changes**

Cancer doesn’t discriminate. It doesn’t care how old you are. Cancer doesn’t care if you have children who need you, or a husband/wife that would be destroyed if they lost you. Cancer is an ugly thing and I hate it. But at the same time, I am thankful for the changes I have made in myself since I found out about that ugly cancer. My Mama says I don’t even talk the same way. I am happy. I am in love with life and I will fight with the whole armor of God to keep it. Sunday, Sydney Brant Photography (amazing), took our family pictures. I was hoping to get them taken before I lost my hair, but my husband was working a lot and I wasn’t feeling well. However, I’m really glad I did it now. I will cherish those pictures forever. I will always be reminded of this time in my life, when I woke up and realized how precious life is and how quickly it can be

taken away. I will be reminded of the warmth and joy I feel in my heart and how absolutely blessed I am. I don't ever want to take life for granted.

I have good news for you! You don't have to go through something extreme to change your perspective. We can change at any given moment, that's the beautiful thing. We have the opportunity every day to change the rest of our lives! I recommend reading the Bible, there is some great stuff in there. You'll find so much encouragement for any situation. It's important to talk to God every day. He is listening, I promise you that. Think about it.

**Now not later**

When we visualize our life, we generally picture a lot of time being involved, right? We believe there is always "later." Well, that was me. I was a "later" person. There were things I wanted to do with Taylor, but I'd put them off until later. I wanted to date my husband, but we would do that later. I wanted to have a closer walk with God. There was always time for that, later.

We are not promised tomorrow. "Later" may never come. There is only One who knows when our time is up. He could come for us all any given moment. So I want to be a "now" person. I want to take advantage of every moment I can, and make them into sweet memories. I want Taylor and Luke to have the best childhood to look back on when they are my age. I was blessed with that childhood. When I look back on my life, I have so many good times to hold on to. I'm looking forward to making many more! So if you're putting things off until later, ask yourself, "what am I really waiting for?" Take advantage of the time you have! Be productive. Be happy!

**Are you ready?**

I wasn't sure about sharing this one, but I keep feeling pressed to share this view of death/dying. So I'm going to obey, here it goes.

We're all going to die, unless Jesus comes back to take us home before that time comes. Some might say, "Why worry about that now? We have plenty of time!" Wrong. We all need to think about the end, as depressing as that may sound. It's just reality. Are you ready? I wasn't. The thought of death absolutely terrified me. I wasn't sure what would happen to me afterwards. Have I lived a life that is pleasing to God? Do I have that relationship with Him, that will ensure my entry into Heaven? The thought of an afterlife was so huge, so beyond my understanding, I wasn't even sure I believed in it. All of this changed when I found out I was dying, when my end didn't seem quite so far away.

After accepting a closer walk with my Savior, I am not afraid of death. I know exactly where I am going when I take my last breath. It will be easy. Peaceful. I will walk... no, run, into the arms of my Father. I still can't wrap my mind around it, and I'm not sure that I ever will, really. But I know I'm ready when my time comes, and that's a good feeling. Those that we have lost, they are rejoicing in Heaven! They will never suf-



fer again, they will never shed a tear. No pain, no sadness.

Don't get me wrong, I am fighting with everything I have to live. While I love my Father and I look forward to meeting Him in Heaven, I want to live here on Earth as long as I can. I want to be with my family and enjoy His blessings for the rest of my long life. That is the part that still scares me; leaving my babies, leaving my family. I feel like my

death will be easy, but the thought of my children growing up without me is unbearable. So the battle is on, and glory to God it is already won. By His stripes, I am healed!

**Thank you**

Our family would like to thank you all for your constant prayers, love and support for Whitney over the last year. Not only did you share in the light of her faith and courage, but you shared the burden of her darkest days. So many times when she would retire to her room--our best efforts at lifting her up having crumbled under the weight of our own heavy hearts--she would pick up her phone or laptop and almost instantly be elevated by your messages, responses and phone calls. Whitney touched so many lives only because you allowed her into your hearts. You didn't join her on her journey so much as allowing her to join each of you on your own personal, unique journey as we all face life's battles. You were her army. An army of God that appeared out of

the bleak horizon and carried her when she could not carry herself. Now she has finished her tour. Not without injury or scars, but with a final victory nonetheless. Now we turn our hearts back to the battleground that we so easily forget is raging. Not only to comfort others in need, but to take new ground in faith and courage. We have all gained ground. We have all grown by the light of her love for Christ--a love light that only radiated more and more... even in the last hours.

Try not to question or doubt why Whitney was not healed in this life. Our faith and whether we believe in God's power can not rest on her shoulders. Only Christ could carry that burden. Whitney's purpose may have been just to confirm in our hearts what we already know to be true. Only by faith can we embrace the miracle of Christ and the power of His blood. And only by letting our light shine can we realize the fullness of the joy of sharing that miracle.

Thank you,  
**(Mother) Stacy Hardee**

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