



## Christine H.

The first time I was diagnosed with breast cancer was November of 2003. I was just 35 years old. I was a single mom of twins that were 8 and my youngest was 5. I would have never guessed that I would be diagnosed with breast cancer. Everyone, including the expert radiologist said, “I am sure that lump is nothing, you will be fine.” I agreed and thought nothing of it until it wasn’t fine anymore. With my family and friends by my side we rallied together and we fought with a lumpectomy, chemo and radiation, and I moved on with my life. I would have never guessed that I would be diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer, but it happened in May of 2013.

I had attributed the symptoms to stress, but eventually wound up having a mammogram and an ultrasound that showed the cancer had spread to my chest wall, chest tissues, muscles and lymph nodes. One day I was at work, the next I was talking to my oncologist about quality of life and an incurable disease. Damn.

My initial treatments actually went very well and I was able to work for quite some time. Then they stopped working and keeping the cancer at bay became a challenge. Your body goes through the obvious physical challenges, but emotionally the process takes several months and is oh, so difficult. You worry a lot and you fester and you try to find an answer in things around you. While I couldn’t find any answers or clues about what my future holds, I did find peace in knowing that the best I can do is to be true to myself and to find joy in the time that I have.

During the process of finding answers I found myself at The Breast Cancer Coalition. My first visit was reassuring and a bit overwhelming. I cried through most of my second visit caught up in the love and understanding that I felt. This was going to be a great place for me to be. I am now a “regular” at the Coalition and feel a sense of peace every time I walk through the front door.

The Coalition, my family, my friends and the unselfish acts I see from people all the time help me as I fight the beast that lives within me. I take time to do things I love and to enjoy the people in my life. I find joy in every day. I am strong, I am brave.