



Alison D.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was 45 years old on March 23, 2014. I was originally told I had Atypical Ductal Hyperplasia so I wasn't very concerned and neither was my surgeon. I simply needed a lumpectomy; there was only 3% chance of it being cancer and with no family history of breast cancer, I was confident that this would be a quick problem to fix. When my phone rang on Sunday night, my life changed forever. I was shocked when my doctor told me they didn't get clean margins and I did in fact have breast cancer. My new diagnosis was DCIS and the doctor was confident that they caught it early. After that, everything seemed to happen so quickly. I don't believe I was processing what was happening, I was just going through the motions of what I needed to do so I could get back to my real focus, which was my family. My daughter was going to be graduating from high school and I still had 2 younger kids that needed my attention, so I didn't want to think about cancer. My husband was so helpful and drove over to BCCR and asked what he could do to help me. He came home with a bunch of brochures and plenty of information to help me deal with this diagnosis. I was so numb at the time and I just didn't feel comfortable sharing this with anyone other than my immediate family. He encouraged me to reach out for help, but I just wasn't ready.

I ended up having a mastectomy with the muscle sparing tram flap for reconstruction. I only had enough tissue to do one breast at a time so I did the side with cancer first. The recovery was much tougher than I expected and I had a lot of difficulty with cording and fibrosis afterwards. Since my right side lit up on the MRI too, it was in my best interest to have a mastectomy on the other side too. In December of 2014, I had the other breast removed and had the tug flap, using both inner thighs for reconstruction. The recovery from my second surgery was even tougher as I got an infection and landed in the hospital for 5 days. This entire journey was much tougher and longer than I expected.

I have always been a private person with my feelings, so I never felt I was strong enough to reach out to anyone for help. I had several people tell me that I didn't have cancer since I didn't have chemo or radiation and this made me feel like I didn't belong at BCCR. In May of 2015, I wanted to give back to BCCR since they were so caring when they never even met me. Now my family walks alongside me every Mother's Day at the Pink Ribbon Walk & Run. In 2017, I made a career change when I saw an ad for a job opportunity at BCCR. A big part of my career has been helping others and I felt I was ready for a change, so I was thrilled when I was hired at BCCR in October 2017. Since working there, I have gained so much and absolutely love going to work each day knowing that I am helping others and can relate to what they are going through. I feel fortunate that I could take such a negative experience and turn it into a positive one by helping others through their journey with cancer.