



## Sylvia R.

I am a busy career woman, wife, mom to a daughter and two sons, and blessed with a grandson. On December 27, 2013, just 20 days after my 52 birthday, I heard the words, “you have breast cancer”. Although shocked, I was not surprised. I had this sense that the results from the biopsy were not going to be good.

There’s never a good time to receive a cancer diagnosis and my experience was no different. We had recently decided to switch our health plan to one with a lower premium and a higher deductible. After all, we were “healthy people” and believed we would need our insurance only for routine appointments and screenings. Now, faced with a cancer diagnosis, we needed to switch back to our original insurance. My husband immediately spoke to his employer and thank God time was on our side. We were able to keep our previous health plan.

My treatment was a “cocktail” of three chemotherapy drugs: Taxotere, Carboplatin, and Herceptin. This was followed by two Fridays of Herceptin only, and then the series began again with the “cocktail.” For four and a half months, I was on this treatment cycle. Afterward, I continued with Herceptin for a year.

I tried to keep my sense of humor – even when my wig blew off in a parking lot. I chased that wig across the lot, grabbed it, and threw it back on my head. When I looked around to see if anyone saw this, I noticed a lady sitting in her car laughing. It was funny to me, too! I got back in the car and drove off.

Bald in the summer...I felt no need for hats, wigs, or scarves. The choice was liberating. I would apply my make-up and go! One person, unaware of my treatment, asked if my baldness was a ‘fashion statement.’ I replied, “No, this is a chemo statement.”

While at the cancer treatment center, I would pick up BCCR newsletters but never had a desire to call or attend any of the events. It wasn’t until a couple of years ago when a friend and pink “sista” passed my name on to BCCR to become a part of the regional advocacy committee. This appealed to me as a way of becoming involved and educated on how BCCR or I could help women in my local community during her breast cancer experience.

Throughout the breast cancer experience, I had wonderful support from my husband Mark; children, sisters, brothers and church family.

After my final surgery, I felt released! I was released from all that went along with the breast cancer journey. I was no longer ‘delaying’ my life. Already a realtor, I acquired my broker’s license and opened my own brokerage. I am enjoying life to the fullest!

For those who are just beginning the breast cancer journey, I say, “You can survive this. Don’t allow it to redefine your life. Don’t ‘become’ a cancer patient. It’s not who you are, it’s what you’re going through. You might cry, feel sorry for yourself, and feel pitiful, but don’t stay there! Get back up and FIGHT LIKE A GIRL.”