



Getting ready to leave the house one day, I adjusted my V-neck shirt to cover my bra. My fingers hit a lump on my chest that I knew right away shouldn't be there. I was 41.

I'd worked for years with the American Cancer Society, so I was more prepared than most when the biopsy was positive.

We saw a breast surgeon first. I couldn't wait to be rid of the cancer and I expected to leave that appointment with a surgery date.

Instead, we found out that the tumor was fast-growing, triple negative and at least Stage 2. The surgeon felt an enlarged lymph node under my arm that she was sure was cancerous. We were advised to find an oncologist and consider clinical trials.

I was scared, but I also knew I was lucky. My husband had a great job with good health insurance, while I got to hang out with our kids, ages 6 and 8. While they were in school, I ran and biked the trails along the Chattahoochee River, kick boxed and taught Zumba, so I was physically fit. We were surrounded by supportive friends and family.

In March, 2012, I joined a clinical trial that included 6 months of a daily chemo pill, plus Taxol and Cisplatin infusions. A bilateral mastectomy followed, with a partial axillary dissection and reconstruction with tissue expanders. The expanders were filled, then deflated when doctors recommended radiation. After my skin healed, they were filled again. My exchange surgery was this past June.

TurningPoint

After my mastectomy, I walked in to TurningPoint, hunched over and reluctant to move. Thick, painful cords ran through my arm. Lauren was confident she could help, and she did, immediately. She said, "We will get you back to doing the things you love."

Since then, she, Anita and Cathy have provided manual massage, fitted me with a compression sleeve, helped me stretch angry muscles and restored my range of motion to nearly 100%. I have left every visit feeling better, physically and mentally.

The office staff makes getting help easy. There is no hassle, no redundant forms to fill out. And, if you know a survivor who needs a treat, send her for a massage.

Rehab has allowed me to care for our children and home again, and to exercise, which is especially important for triple negative survivors. I teach Zumba at the Y, coach Girls on the Run and we just returned from a family bike trip through Montana. I am back to doing the things that bring me joy. And I am not defined by cancer.

Thank you, TurningPoint. And congratulations on your new digs!

Nicole Yates