

Elizabeth Haeussler



“My name is Elizabeth Bass Haeussler and I am a survivor. When you first hear the news, it’s like the wind being knocked out of you. In November 2010, I was diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma. For me it was shock, as well as, the feeling of it being so real. Denial never came into play.

This was really happening to me and I knew that very clearly. Honestly, all I could think about was my family and how they felt. Not about me, but how my Mom and husband must be feeling at that very moment when we were told. I could see it in their eyes. Next, I thought about how my kids would feel. They needed me. What if I ended up leaving them alone? How can I tell them?

First and foremost, I want each of you to realize that you must be your own advocate.

Doctors are only human, even though we all expect them to be God. Machines are made by humans so they can’t be expected to be perfect either. Screenings and mammograms are essential, but that’s not all you need. You need to listen to your own instinct. If you feel something is wrong, you should insist on being checked and rechecked, even if that means going elsewhere. This is true for both women and men. Early detection is very important. It could be the difference between life and death.

I had my mammogram in May of 2010. About a week later I got the letter stating all was clear. I went on with life without worry. By August, I knew something wasn’t right. After a lot of procrastination, I finally got in to see the doctor in October. He reassured me that he thought everything was ok, but he sent me to a surgeon

to make sure. The surgeon also reassured me it was probably ok, but he scheduled an ultrasound. Once that had been done, the doctor at the hospital informed me things looked very worrisome. My surgeon still felt like it would probably be ok, but scheduled a biopsy to get confirmation. He didn’t feel like it would be malignant since it’s not so common at my age. By the way, I’ve learned age doesn’t matter!! I put off my return visit until a week later, which was the day after my daughters 17th birthday. I definitely didn’t want to chance ruining her birthday so I waited until afterwards. That was a good call because the days to follow weren’t so pleasant. On November 12, 2010, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. My family and I remained strong. I was doing it for them and they were doing it for me. That’s what you do when you have no other choice. Giving in or giving up was not in the picture.

Elizabeth Haeussler's story continued...

The months ahead consisted of many more tests, second opinions and road trips to Birmingham. The MRI proved to be the best screening of all, especially for someone my age. It showed things that had been missed by both the mammogram and ultrasound. I was further diagnosed with multi-centric breast cancer. I had three tumors. Mastectomy was my only option. Luckily for me the pet scan, which checks bones, organs and lymph nodes, appeared clear. After many tests and schedule juggling for doctor visits, I did not have my surgery until February 9, 2011. A tiny tumor had made it to one of my lymph nodes by then, but was small enough that no chemotherapy or radiation would be needed. I have to admit I had a few thoughts of fear before my 6 12 hour surgery, even though I tried to remain positive. What if it hurts? What if I don't wake up? After trying to prepare myself for those possibilities, I quickly replaced my fears with the comfort and peace I found in prayer. When you get that close to the edge, no one but God can really help you the way you need it. Your family and friends can stand by you, support you, and love you, but unfortunately they can't save you. No matter how much they

would like to. Sure, the doctors definitely can help you ... but inside, I knew if God didn't want me to be cured for some reason, then it wasn't happening, plain and simple. Prayer and a positive attitude were the only answers for me. I never really doubted that I would be ok. I believed that I would be cured and I was. I am a survivor. I owe it all to God, some great doctors and nurses, and my amazing family, friends, boss and coworkers. Everyone was supportive and loving to me. Without that I may not have found the strength and courage that it took.

I know we see a lot of shirts and other products with the words hope, strength, courage, faith, love and so on. Those things are all VERY important. For me it's faith, strength, hope and love. Faith, without doubt, that I would be cured. Faith dares the soul to go where the eyes can't see. Strength. I had to find the strength to face what I had to go through head on without fear. Hope. Hope that everything would be alright. Hope that one day a cure can be found for everyone that continues to battle this disease, and Love. I am blessed with the love of my wonderful family and friends, who were there and continue to be there for me every

step of the way. Through these things ... faith, strength, hope and love I was able to fight and win.

In closing, let's just say God grabbed me and he shook me up a bit. He wanted me to slow down and listen. Believe me I did. The most important lesson I learned is that every day is a gift that we should all cherish. So, live it well!! That's what I plan to do.

