

Stephanie Carroll



“The initials BC were typically associated with “before coffee” among my friends and family. Not in a million years would I have ever thought that BC would now be short for Breast Cancer. My name is Stephanie Carroll and I am a current graduate student at Auburn University working on a Ph.D. in Counseling Education and Supervision. I am also a stage IV breast cancer fighter! I thought I would share a glimpse of how my world was recently turned upside down.

I started having back and hip pain in January 2013. I thought that I had injured myself exercising and did not think too much into the pain but I did go see a doctor. When the pain continued, I was referred to physical therapy. When 2 ½ months of physical therapy was not alleviating the pain, the recommendation was to go back to the doctor. From January to May I lived with increasing pain and no one knew where it stemmed from. The day-to-day life of being a college student, working 2 ½ jobs, and trying to stay balanced didn’t have much room for chronic pain and fatigue!

I am thankful that I have learned the art of being proactive when it comes to my health. I went to an orthopedic doctor who suggested that an MRI would be a good starting point to see what is going on in my back/hip. The results showed “spots” on my spine and hips, which could be something or nothing. However, by this time I was also having pain in my ribs, chest, and shoulder areas which complicated matters and had doctors confused. My worst fear at this point was the possibility of having back surgery. From May 23rd to June 25th my life seemed to shift from a working college student to a whirlwind of doctor appointments, tests, and scans. A bone scan confirmed that I had a metastatic disease of some sort all in my bones but there was no main source. A doctor’s appointment and blood work on Monday, CT scans, a mammogram, and an ultra sound on Tuesday, a breast biopsy on Wednesday, and results on Friday afternoon sitting in a small computer/office room confirmed that this otherwise healthy 32 year old does indeed have breast cancer.

Stephanie Carroll's story continued...

The “tumor” was only 11mm – less than ½ inch! A bone biopsy confirmed that I have stage IV breast cancer that has spread to my bone/bone marrow. I had to choose to either be engulfed by the reality of “terminal statistics” and fears or choose to dig deep down inside, face my fears head on, and start to fight the battle for my life.

My BC journey has allowed me to work on personal character traits such as asking questions, determination, perseverance, and not giving up! Life can change in a split second and today I try not to take anything for granted. Today, I look at all the little things that I can count as blessings. I have been BLESSED with a wonderful support group of people at Auburn University from the different departments I have worked with over the past three years and I wish to thank each of them for their continued thoughts and prayers.

Most importantly I have a faith that continues to grow daily. I have a peace today that God is much bigger than my cancer. He made man, medicine and He makes miracles everyday! Together with Him, my family, friends, wonderful medical staff, and medicine I believe I will be free of cancer one day!

Life IS what you make of it! This journey is only one chapter of my long life ahead. I have decided that I will not give up on my schooling and can see the finish line – walking across the stage and being a proud Auburn University Alumni.

The Auburn creed continues to remind me that I believe in work, hard work; I believe in a spirit that is not afraid; and I walk humbly with my God and I continue to fight every day!

