

JMG Charity

In February of 2011, I heard the words no mother wants to hear...you have cancer. Leukemia to be exact; an extremely rare strain of leukemia that generally affects men over the age of 50. For that reason (I don't fit that demographic profile), and to confirm the diagnosis, I had multiple trips to the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, including overnight stays. Because the strain was so rare, they wanted to monitor my progress for research purposes. But I was told that it could be up to five years before I needed treatment, as this is a slow developing strain. During the months that followed, my health seemed to deteriorate, but I kept a positive attitude. I shared my battle with my co-workers and they could not have been more supportive. I believed (and still do) that God gave me this battle because he knew I would fight it and win, and someone somewhere in my life needed to see that. So I chose not to fight the battle alone and leaned on those around me.

As tests continued to show that my condition was worsening faster than the doctors had anticipated, it became apparent that something else was at play. More tests revealed that I had a secondary condition that also affected my platelet and hemoglobin levels, the same things that this strain leukemia attacked aggressively. Since the secondary condition is not treatable and the leukemia is, it was determined that we would proceed with chemotherapy. In a matter of 8 months, my prognosis changed from waiting 5 years or more to we need to do this immediately.

Cancer is expensive! The trips across the state to the cancer center, the weekly oncology appointments, the inpatient treatment (the kind of chemo I needed, required me to be admitted to the hospital for ten days), the follow-up appointments, the missed work...I could go on! Having five kids at home, along with the expenses to go along with them and knowing that I was looking at upwards of a month off of work was adding stress that I didn't know how to handle. With all this taking place in late October, the holidays were creeping up quickly too.

On November 3rd, my platelet levels dropped to a level that made internal bleeding a true risk. I had the surgery to place my chemo port on November 8th. I was admitted to the hospital on November 14th. I had my inpatient treatment and came home November 23rd...the day before Thanksgiving. With a white blood cell count of 0.0, I was quarantined, but it was good to be home. I would end up being home for 3 additional weeks before I was healthy enough to be in public without the risk of becoming extremely ill.

Every year, JMG Realty does giving back charitable donations at the holidays, helping families and charitable causes. Unbeknownst to me, many people in my work family had nominated me for this. I honestly had no idea and was shocked when I found out. The amount of love and support that I felt during this time cannot be expressed with simple words. Between the monetary donations and donations of sick time coverage, I was able to take the time off that I needed to recover, cover all of my deductibles, stay on top of my bills and provide Christmas for my family.

I beat cancer, but cancer didn't beat me! And here I am just shy of 3 years later, still in remission and telling my story! The best thing my oncologist ever said was that this was something I'll live with, not die from. I've got a lot more life to live and am forever grateful to my JMG family for being there when it was least expected, but most needed.

