

2018 Courage Award Finalist

ERICA HOFFMAN

BEFORE



AFTER



On October 19th, 2015 I was admitted to Northside Hospital after several weeks of unexplained weight loss, vomiting, and intense stomach pain. Two days later, a colonoscopy revealed Stage IV metastatic colon cancer. I was 33 years old.

By December 22nd, 2015 I was on my first round of 8 treatments of chemotherapy, which I affectionately call, "thug drugs." I was encouraged to gain weight and due to the chemo and steroids I blew up. Since then, it has been a never-ending battle to keep my body feeling at least mediocre. No one can quite prepare you for side effects like cold induced neuropathy, peeling skin, nausea, and whacked out taste buds. I also had to wear a pump for 46 hours every other week, which infused a med called 5FU. Believe me, it felt just like its name insinuated. It was a test of my faith in God and of my will to fight.

Meanwhile, my mother, a 15-year veteran of breast cancer was also fighting a battle with her third diagnosis of metastatic disease. We linked arms, bound by our trials, encouraging one another when we were having a rough time with our respective therapies. Eventually, I was put on a maintenance dose of chemo, which I could take via pill rather than by infusion. Unfortunately, chemotherapy failed my mother and her condition rapidly declined. On May

28th, 2018 my mom was rushed to the hospital. My family and I sat by her bedside as she passed away May 29th, one day after her 66th birthday.

My mom epitomized the word "fighter." If she was told she couldn't do something, she bowed up and pushed even harder. Her dying wish was a Celebration of Life party with all our closest friends and family instead of a funeral. I was asked to sing with the band that we hired for the party. In pain, and miserable at 160lbs, four dress sizes larger than I'd ever been in my life, there was no way I was stepping foot on stage looking and feeling like I did. It was time to take action.

Driving by House of Payne Personal Training one day I was inspired to give them a call and immediately signed up after a consultation with Steve Payne. Seven weeks later and 110% investment of focused adherence to his plan, I feel stronger and healthier than I did even before I was diagnosed with cancer. Some people want to do marathons and mud runs. I just wanted to walk up my stairs without pain! My mother's memory inspires me every time I walk in the gym. Sometimes, during a challenging workout, I pause for a moment, holding back tears as I hear her voice in my head saying, "come on, baby-girl, you've got this." Although my goal is October 6th and I have one more month of work to achieve it, I'm thrilled to show off my new figure and honor my mother at her Celebration of Life.

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