

Survival and Hope *Life After Cancer*



DENISE RODERICK
DIAGNOSIS: BREAST CANCER,
STAGE 4

The Basics:

- **RESIDENCE:** Victorville
- **OCCUPATION:** High School teacher
- **FAMILY:** Leslie Myers, 56, sister; Roberta Terry, sister; Cynthia Gisler, 33, daughter, and her fiancé Jeremy Watson and their three children; Keith York, 38, son and his wife Mindee and their three children
- **HOBBIES:** Loves spending time with grandchildren, friends and family; likes to travel; collects Coca Cola memorabilia; likes crossword and jigsaw puzzles
- **PHILOSOPHY:** I have always been a pretty positive person; that is still there. I think that is part of why I am still alive. I ultimately believe in my miracle; God's timing isn't always our timing.

By Alberta Hale Crigler

Denise Roderick was diagnosed with breast cancer at the end of 2010. She had bilateral mastectomies in February 2011 followed by chemotherapy from April through June.

"I went back to work in August 2011 and wore a hat because I still had no hair," she said.

A full-time high school teacher, Roderick said she always has been open with her students about her



illness. She wants them to know there may be times she is absent from teaching, and that treatments can affect her appearance.

Two - a n d - a - h a l f years ago, around the beginning of March, Roderick started coughing. She was treated for asthma and allergies, but the cough continued.

"The doctor said, 'I don't know what else to try, your lungs are clear when I listen,'" Roderick said.

"I said I want a CT, but he said, 'Your lungs are clear.'

"I said, 'I don't care, I have done everything you asked; I want a CT.' When it came back, he was floored."

Roderick had the scan in March 2016, and was referred to City of Hope to treat the recurrence of her cancer. "I have been treated by them ever since.

"I go every four weeks for a checkup. I am on

an oral chemo and a hormone blocker.

"My last CT in July showed slight growth in one tumor in my lungs. I currently have six tumors on my spine, one in each lung, and one on my sternum.

Roderick said her illness has brought her family closer together. "I see my grandchildren more often. Overall, the time that we spend together is more quality time. And we take more pictures."

Roderick said other than making her appreciate good days more, her illness has not changed her outlook on life.

"I have always had a faith in God; I have always had a purpose," she said.



"When the CT came back, the Dr. was floored."

Roderick said radiation last year was the toughest obstacle she has faced. "I was in the hospital for three days up here," she said. "They released me and shouldn't have. I went into the hospital in Rancho (Cucamonga) for seven more days.

Roderick has participated in the Relay for Life for the last eight years. "I have captained a team for the last six years," she said.

"I have gone to a few of the Journey Through Cancer workshops. But most of my support comes through God, family and friends.

Roderick made the decision not to be treated with two recommended chemotherapy drugs, Taxol and Tamoxifen.

"I did a lot of praying," she said. "I honestly believe that God is ultimately in control, so it probably would have ended up the same. I feel fortunate: It is stage 4 and not curable, but it was caught relatively early."

Caregiver Perspective

Leslie Myers said when her sister Denise first had to go through chemotherapy and had double mastectomies, "I was here for that."

"Now that she has been diagnosed stage 4 and not curable, only treatable, she is very focused on making memories. I totally support her in that," Leslie said.

"With new students, she tells them what is going on within a week or so. She sees it as a part of life that people need to be prepared for. It is relatable to a lot of students nowadays; many of them know someone who has the big C."

Ana Lopez-Rosende said Denise, her friend of nearly 25 years, "depended on me to be the rock."

At times, she has demanded that Denise eat, exercise, and work to maintain her health.

"Sometimes you have to draw the line with the other person and take the role of a parent," she said. "We had some hard discussions. I told her, you can't do this to the people who love you.

"She would say, 'It's not about the other people, it's about me.'

"And I would say, 'No, it's about us too. We don't want you to lose this fight.'"



The American Cancer Society provides a 24 hour service to answer questions about diagnosis, insurance, local support and resources

www.cancer.org or
call 800-227-2345

These stories of survival, hope and prosperity brought to you by:

FULL SERVICE LAW FIRM
LAW OFFICES OF
RIPLEY & ASSOCIATES
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

INJURED?

- AUTO ACCIDENTS • SLIPS & FALLS
- DOG BITES • WRONGFUL DEATH
- SERIOUS INJURIES

- FAMILY LAW • WILLS, TRUST & PROBATE
- BUSINESS LAW • REAL ESTATE LAW
- BANKRUPTCY

CALL RIPLEY NOW!

U.S. CONGRESS HAS DESIGNATED US AS A DEBT RELIEF AGENCY

• Se habla español • Free Consultation

VANIR TOWER SUITE 901
290 NORTH D STREET • SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92401.
(909) 383 - 4422

VICTORVILLE CIVIC CENTER
14440 CIVIC DRIVE, BLDG A • VICTORVILLE, CA 92392.
(760) 243 - 4488

Serving the High Desert and Inland Empire
Located across the street from the courthouse.