

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



About Me:

Residence: Apple Valley

JOB: Office manager at an acupuncture office

FAMILY: Kerstyn Carr, 31, daughter; Taylor Carr, 30, son; Allison, daughter-in-law; three grandchildren

HOBBIES: Sewing; an avid reader

PHILOSOPHY: For this last year, and what got me through this whole adventure: Sometimes you have to let go of the picture of what you thought life would be and learn to find joy in the story you are living

**“Live your normal life.
Don’t let cancer bring you down”**



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

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If you or someone you know would like to be featured in this series, please contact Liz McGiffin at liz.mcgiffin@cancer.org.

Carol Carr, 55 Type of Cancer: Breast Cancer

By Alberta Hale Crigler

Carol Carr was diagnosed with breast cancer about a year ago during an annual mammogram.

“It was one of those things when they say, ‘hmm... we need to get a hold of your primary care physician,’ and you know something is wrong,” she said.

“After years of mammograms, they (usually) say, ‘OK, bye. We’ll let you know.’

“You try to tell yourself it is just one of the blips on the screen and it is going to be fine.”

Carr said the doctor wanted to do a biopsy right away. However, a referral from her primary care physician was needed first, and that doctor was not available.

“They can’t tell you anything – legally they can’t tell you; but you can see by the expression on their face.

“For me, the surprise was when I finally got to the oncologist and found out I was stage 3. To find out you are stage 3 is like, whoa!

“My cancer is triple negative, which is normally found in African-American women under 40.

“They ended up doing genetic testing on me. I was negative for BRCA1, BRCA2 and HER1. The cancer was not estrogen based.

“The perk is I won’t have to take pills for the next five to 10 years.

“The disadvantage is the only way to treat it is through chemo. I had six months of chemo and no radiation.

Carr found plenty of cancer support in the High Desert.

“(Cancer survivor) Theresa Shellcroft came

over to my house with a box from the High Desert Cancer Connection,” she said.

“It has so many things for support. You are literally a phone call away.”

She also attended meetings at the St. Joseph Women’s Cancer Support Group at St. Mary Medical Center in Apple Valley.

“Sitting there, listening and talking to those women, it helped me decide what I was going to do,” Carr said.

“(Talking to) people who were going through it is different than your family and friends saying, ‘We are here for you.’

“I did the Relay for Life and the Cancer Action Team through Merle Norman. They do chemo bags to help make chemo more comfortable.

“They picked me to be the ‘I Am Beautiful’ campaign face. They used my picture from Facebook.

“I support the Relay for Life and American Cancer Society because it is education.

“There are people who volunteer to drive you to appointments. They will pay for you to stay in a hotel if you need it.

“I tell people: ‘Here is the resource. Get the information, it will help you. Don’t be afraid to ask. I had to humble myself and ask for help – it is there.’”

Carr said at first, when her children heard her diagnosis; they seemed to be in denial. But her family participated in her recovery, too.

“I chose to shave my head on December 29, my 55th birthday,” she said. “My hair was falling out; I was literally waking up with clumps of it falling out.



“My grandkids cut my hair and my daughter-in-law trimmed it up. That was the end of December 2018, and I was a month into chemo.

“Taking my hair off was the one thing I could control.

“Recently, a friend of mine from back home said, ‘I was diagnosed yesterday, what do I do?’

“I said, ‘don’t panic; educate yourself. It is kind of hurry up and wait.

“Don’t make any rash decisions right away. Know what your options are.

“Live your normal life. Don’t let cancer bring you down. You do have a new normal coming up.”

Carr has an appointment to complete her reconstructive surgery. At the same time, the port in her chest used to infuse her chemotherapy medications will be removed.

“June 27, 2019 is the date I am going to remember,” she said. “It is the date I was told my markers were clear and I was good to go. That is my new birthday – the new me is born.”

Looking to the future:

Carol Carr is divorced and wonders about her future.

“The prospect of being alone into my 70s and 80s; I don’t know,” she said.

“To have been divorced for 40 years? It is definitely something that goes through the mind of people who are single.

“Is it going to be possible to find somebody that would want to be involved with someone like this?

“The way I look doesn’t bother me. “But, when you are going out, when is the right time (to talk about cancer)?

“I have always been upfront and honest; I don’t want to waste anybody’s time.

“You don’t know if you have two months, two years, 20 years. That is my quandary.”

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