

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



About Me:

CITY: Apple Valley

JOB TITLE: On disability

FAMILY: Three daughters, sister, three brothers, nieces, great-nieces and a great-nephew

HOBBIES: I am OCD, so I love to clean.

I love to go for walks.

PHILOSOPHY: I have been through a lot and I have actually given up once. What gets me through life is family.

“I wasn’t afraid of dying”



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

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

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

Tammy Pelletier, 56

Type of Cancer: Cervical in 1990; skin cancer in 2011

By Alberta Hale Crigler

Tammy Pelletier was only 27 years old in 1990 when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer.

“After I had my third daughter, they did a PAP smear and they found abnormal cells,” she said.

“They went back in and took a chunk out of me for a biopsy and it came back cervical cancer.

“I didn’t react. I didn’t cry, I didn’t do anything. I just asked, ‘What do we do?’

“They told me they were going to do some kind of procedure. I honestly don’t remember what it was called, but they froze my insides.

“They gave me two different creams I had to use – one at night, and that was not very pleasant.

“The first cream took off all the dead stuff, the morning cream was to help it heal,” she said.

“I did that for six weeks. Then, that was it. They checked and it was gone.

“My mom panicked when she heard about it. She was the only one I had out there with me in Massachusetts.

“She made sure she went to all of my appointments. She took me to have the freezing procedure done.

“I had 5-year-old, a 3-year-old and a newborn. It didn’t keep me down.

“I had to get my oldest one to school, cook

meals, and give them baths. I was a single mother then.

“My mother lived in the next city over – maybe a 15 to 20-minute ride. She was working, too.

“Most of the time my mother took me to appointments and my stepfather had to watch the kids.

“I wasn’t afraid of dying. It didn’t bother me because if I didn’t make it, I would be in a better place. I was afraid of what I would have to go through.

“I was only 27; I just tried not to think about it. I had my kids to keep me busy. If it wasn’t for my mother and my kids, I probably would have lost it.

“I had a PAP smear every year for the first five or six years. After that, I didn’t have any PAP smears for a good 10 years, if not longer.

“We went to San Francisco in 2006 and came back here in 2011.

“My first PAP smear was in 2013. That doctor did their scraping and swabbing and everything was fine.

“Just last year, I had a PAP smear and everything was still good.

“Now that I am 56, they will probably want me to go every year.

“I do the same thing for the mammograms. Those come out the same every time.”

Pelletier had another brush with cancer

in 2011 while she was living in San Francisco.

“I have had a mole for most of my life,” she said. “I never paid attention to it until it started doing funny things. It kind of scared me.

Pelletier said when she had a doctor take a look, “they took the Band-Aid off and she said, ‘I want to take the mole off and we need to biopsy it.’

“Right there I started crying because I seriously don’t like needles. I reacted worse to this than the other one.

“I didn’t pay any attention to what kind because I was too busy crying. I am a big baby when it comes to that.

“I want to say the mole was positive for precancerous cells, so they went in a second time to make sure they got it all.

“I had another mole the doctor told me to watch for changes, but that one has never changed.

“Now I am very wary. If I see a mole doing something funny, I will go have it checked out.”

Reasons to Relay

For the past two years, Tammy Pelletier has attended the Relay for Life of the High Desert annual event held at Victor Valley College.

“My friend Gianna had cervical and breast cancer with double mastectomies,” Pelletier said. “She posted on Facebook about the Relay.

“I said, ‘I would love to do that.’

“The first year, I signed up as a caregiver because I took care of my stepfather, and his doctor was pretty sure he had colon cancer.

“It wasn’t confirmed, it was suspected. He refused a colonoscopy, but his fecal exam showed blood. He was agoraphobic and wouldn’t leave the house.

Pelletier first signed up for the Relay as a caregiver.

“But then, I said, wait a minute, I’m a survivor. And I signed up as a survivor.”

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