

Survival and Hope *Life After Cancer*



TARI BLALOCK, 54
TYPE OF CANCER: MELANOMA, STAGE 2

About Me:

- **RESIDENCE:** Hesperia
- **OCCUPATION:** Marketing consultant, business advocate for Beyond
- **FAMILY:** Scott Blalock, 52, husband; Morgan Gavin, 34, son; Anthony Cano, 34, foster son
- **HOBBIES:** Horses, green living, wine connoisseur, marathoner
- **PHILOSOPHY:** Work hard, play hard, live hard. Treat people with respect, and be respectful of the environment.

By Alberta Hale Crigler

Tari Blalock said she became involved with Relay for Life "because they needed someone to get it started in Hesperia. Our first relay was in 2004. Through Relay, Tari met Richard Bounce, who was the logistics coordinator for the organization. "He is the reason I'm still alive," Blalock said. "He is a melanoma survivor.

"Because of his story, I started to pay more attention to my skin. I am a runner, and I would put on minimal clothes and take off and go running. "On my left arm at the T-shirt line, I had a mole; it has always been there. "Doctors would say, 'we'll keep an eye on it.'"



"The dermatologist said it was melanoma even before the biopsy. It wasn't like they say: It wasn't lots of colors. It was one-half inch by one-half inch, and it was flat on my skin, not raised up.

"The dermatologist did a biopsy, and two days later, he called and said they were scheduling surgery.

"He said it was serious and needed to be taken care of.

"It was April. With melanoma at this level, without seeking treatment, I could have been dead by Christmas."

"They took an ice-cream-sized scoop out of my arm to create a three-quarter-inch margin.

By May 2008, Blalock had good news: The pathologist reported her surgery was a success and her margins were clean.

Blalock's husband, Scott, was her main caregiver for the first three months after surgery.

"The guys jumped in and helped with dishes, laundry, and cooking and made sure I had everything I needed," she said.

"I was not allowed to run or ride horses or do anything for three months following surgery. I was very grateful I didn't have to go through radiation or chemo.

"My husband and my son were both in shock when they heard my diagnosis.

"Of course, they heard the word 'cancer' and went straight to 'death,' she said.

"It softened the blow a little bit because we were so involved in Relay for Life.

"We had some education. We knew hearing those three words, 'You have cancer,' is not a death sentence. The earlier you get in and see your doctor, the better your chances.

"We were all very involved in Relay for Life. My brother Patrick was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2001 and lived until 2013. The doctor had told him he had 12 months.

"He had a baseball sized tumor removed from his brain. Two weeks before I was diagnosed, my brother had a relapse. Needless to say, my parents were freaking out.

"Last year, they started having all of the (local) groups together at Victor Valley College as Relay for Life, High Desert," she said.

"I also am a legislative ambassador for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

“... the words, ‘You have cancer,’ is not a death sentence.”

the luminaria. "When I speak (at cancer support events), I spend two minutes talking about myself and the rest of the time I talk about my brother.

I am a Pampered Chef consultant, too, so I have a kitchen show in my home, and proceeds go to the team, which goes to Relay, which goes to ACS, which goes to people in the community. So, a dollar raised here stays here.

Early detection:



"The cool thing about the day Richard Bounce saved my life: He didn't just save my life, he saved three lives," Tari Blalock said

"I called my parents and told them melanoma is hereditary. My dad said he never had it but my grandpa did.

"I told my dad to ask specifically for a head-to-toe skin cancer screening. They found melanoma on his shoulder.

My stepmom's checkup discovered squamous cell carcinoma on her nose.

Get the word out about early detection. Even if you hate doctors, go in for an annual physical.

I tell people, if you have any questions after you leave your doctor, ACS has a 24/7 hotline you can call at 800-ACS-2345



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

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