

## Genesis Chester

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001. I was so shocked because no one in my family had ever had cancer and I was only 37. My three young children were my main concern. Would I be around to see them grow up? Would I pass this on to them? I knew nothing about breast cancer or where to turn. I had heard of Susan G. Komen but wasn't sure who they were and what their purpose was. It would have been nice to have someone to talk to that had been down this road. I needed someone to tell me what to expect, how to deal with the illness and my young children, and how to keep life as normal as possible for my family. I wish I had had someone's shoulder to cry on that understood my emotions and pain. There were times when I just needed someone to say it's going to be okay. I would have welcomed someone from Susan G. Komen to help me down this road.

I was 37 years old when I was diagnosed. My gynecologist had been insisting that I get a base line mammogram for a couple of years but I kept saying no, she finally convinced me. I went for a mammogram and two days later I leaned up against the counter at work and my breast was sore. I called the doctors office to tell them, thinking I was sore from being mashed. They told me my mammogram was clear. I told them I felt as if it needed to be looked at because it was the size of a marble when I first felt it and it was growing. I went in and the doctor looked at it and decided to do a needle biopsy.

The pathology report came back as inflammation. I was concerned because it was still growing, it was the size of a golf ball by then and it was protruding. The doctor felt it should have a biopsy, so I was scheduled for a lumpectomy. The doctor told my husband after the surgery he felt like it was cancer, the pathology report then verified.

I was then faced with decisions. I could do another lumpectomy to make sure the borders were clean or a total mastectomy. I chose the mastectomy followed by chemotherapy and reconstruction.

I am now 12 years cancer free. The one thing I learned out of this, ALL cancer does not show up on mammogram. I think that is something that a lot of women are not aware of and women need to be made aware of that fact. I could have left it alone because there was nothing on the mammogram. Where would I be today if I had?