

April Samuels Says “Breast Cancer Can Stick It!”

Saturday, June 18, 2011

April Samuels and Greg Travis at the 2011 Swim Across America event held last weekend in Dallas.

April Samuels is a prominent musician whose life was changed in late 2010 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. April has taken a hiatus from music to focus on her recovery and help others with cancer. She has even started her own [line of clothing](#), touting the phrase “Breast Cancer Can Stick It”, to promote breast cancer awareness.

After 5+ years of having breast ultrasounds twice a year due to fibrocystic, dense breasts – on October 26, 2010...it happened. “You have breast cancer” said the voice on the other end of the line. Slowly, the sound of the doctor speaking morphed into that of one of Charlie Brown’s teachers. “But I’m only 41!?” I thought. The worst was yet to come.

A few days later, I learned it was a rare, aggressive form known as “Triple Negative” breast cancer: progesterone receptor-negative (PR-), estrogen receptor-negative (ER-), and HER2/neu-negative (HER2-). Hormone therapy would not be an option. I suddenly started thinking I could be dead in a year. I remember looking at my 13-year-old dog thinking of the possibility – she may out live me.

It wasn’t until a bone scan, CT scan, sentinel node biopsy and double mastectomy over the next 12 days revealed no further cancer that I started to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

It was caught early. Just about as early as possible – Stage 1. This thanks to my proactive, life-saver-of-a-doctor demanding the regular semiannual screening.

The next five months of my life included a horrible five-day hospital stay after my lung was punctured, then collapsed as a result of the surgery to install my port followed eight days later by the start of my four-month dance with chemotherapy.

At the time of this writing, I’m now two months past my last chemo treatment, where I was declared (of all things), “cured”!

Towards the end of my treatment, my long-time friend Greg told me about Swim Across America. He said that he and his wife wanted to honor the people they have loved who have had cancer by swimming in the event – and that they wanted to honor me as well. I was touched and thankful that they would want to do such a thing.

I definitely wanted to go to the event – it would be the first cancer benefit I had attended since my

diagnosis. At the event, I was touched by the outpouring of generosity and by the sheer number of swimmers. Each one threw a rock into the waters with the names of those they were honoring. I shared my story with those in attendance and many who I'd never met shared theirs with me in private, often shedding tears. Awareness; hope; camaraderie. These events bring all of this, reminding each of us that we are not alone. We are fighting this together. "Making waves to fight cancer" for sure!

Throughout my journey, I learned many things. I learned not to put things off – like to buy that ice cream cake you always wanted to try or go to Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. I learned to love with all your heart. I learned a church family can save your life. I learned if God can bring you to it, he can bring you through it. I learned we are all blessed if we just pay attention to what's going on around us. And I learned hope was my best friend.