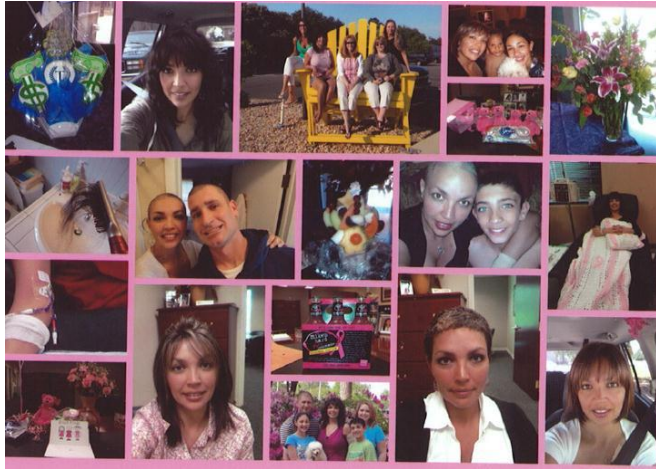


Stories of Hope- Marsha Bell

Posted on [February 16, 2012](#) by [admin](#)

[Share on facebook](#) [Share on twitter](#) [Share on digg](#) [Share on delicious](#) [Share on email](#) [More Sharing Services](#)



Marsha Bell's husband and his girls youth basketball team, the Western Branch Monarchs, have attended the [Hoops for a Cure](#) game for several years. They've watched the survivors walk around the court, and Marsha never imagined being one of the courageous women recognized at the game.

In early 2008, Marsha had a follow up with a surgeon after a surgical procedure, and pointed out a small 'pea-sized' lump in her left breast. Her surgeon told her that it was a suture and her gynecologist accepted the same answer at her annual exam. By the end of 2009, the lump had grown some but there was still no question about it.

After turning 40 in 2010, Marsha went to receive her [routine mammogram](#). Initially coming back normal, Marsha received a letter in the mail from the oncologist's office explaining the need for more views. Now a 2.4 cm lump, Marsha underwent a fine needle aspiration. With inconclusive results, she scheduled to have the mass removed.

"I was in auto-pilot," said Bell. "I was just waiting for the doctor to tell me what was next. I couldn't think anymore."

Monday, January 3, 2011, Marsha Bell was at work when the doctor called her cell phone. After being told she had breast cancer, Marsha felt relieved. "They got it, it's out," said Bell. "Then he tells me I need to go to the office tomorrow to discuss what's next. I was so confused." Marsha was in a state of disbelief. She had no family history of breast cancer.

Given three options: 1- completion of the lumpectomy or lymph node dissection, 2-mastectomy, and 3- double mastectomy, Marsha went with option 1.

In her lymph node dissection, cancer was found in the sentinel node. A few weeks after Marsha's lymph node surgery, her daughter's basketball team, family, and friends went to the ODU Hoops for the Cure game. Walking up, there was a sign for a reception for breast cancer survivors.

"My husband looked at me and suggested I go and register," said Marsha. "I said, no I'm not a survivor, I've just started this and he told me 'You have cancer Marsha, go'."

"When I approached the women I asked 'Does it count if I was just diagnosed?' to which they replied, 'Yes of course, you're a survivor, you're going to make it'."

Women with wigs, strong women, and frail women all surrounded Marsha.

"I felt like I was part of a club I didn't want to belong to," said Marsha. "All of these people with cancer were talking to me and only talking to me because I had cancer."

At one point, Marsha realized that she was one of those people and began to feel a sense of empowerment.

"I realized that I have something I don't want to have, but I don't have to do it alone," she said.

Marsha started her chemotherapy on February 15, 2011.

"The first treatment hit me harder than I ever thought it could," she said. "My bones, legs, feet, back, even my face- everything hurt."

A week after her third treatment, Marsha noticed a heated, red mark on her right wrist. Soon after the mark spread from her wrist up to her pinky and before she knew it she was breaking out in hives all over her body.

Marsha had experienced an allergic reaction.

"My hands became darker and darker, blotches appeared on my face, and the moons of my nails were turning black, neuropathy set in," said Marsha.

On Tuesday, March 29, 2011, Marsha went in for her fourth and final chemo.

"I was terrified," she said, "I didn't know if I would be able to get through it. I gave my husband, David, some 'just-in-case instructions'."

After a relatively smooth final treatment, Marsha began radiation.

"It was a surreal experience," said Marsha. "It became obvious how much people loved me. My co-workers set up a calendar to deliver meals and every time I came into work, there was something pink on my desk. "

Marsha completed her radiation treatment on Wednesday, June 22, 2011.

“I had wonderful people at work and my family at home,” said Marsha. “Support re-emphasizes your self-worth, faith and belief. I never felt angry or punished by my diagnosis. I realized that God doesn’t give us anything we can’t handle, so he knew that this was something I could get through.”

When asked what advice she would give to newly diagnosed individuals, Marsha said,

“Let people talk to you, help you, and accept the love. Don’t see it as pity and don’t be too proud. Everything that everyone is trying to do for you is coming from a good place; no one is doing anything other than to help you.”

We at [Susan G. Komen Tidewater](#) would like to again thank Marsha Bell for her willingness and openness to discuss her breast cancer journey, and now with all of you. Marsha is truly an inspiration, a fighter, and now a survivor.