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Faith and gratitude spur Moody to help others

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BY AMANDA CREASEY ON OCTOBER 16, 2018

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ABOVE: Siblings Caleb and Madison Broga made their own 'Pink-Out Day' shirts in October 2015 to surprise Terri Moody, center, who taught them at Colonial Heights High School.

Terri Moody tends to be "a girl who follows the rules and does as I'm told," so when her healthcare provider scheduled her for her first routine mammogram, she "didn't question the need to have the test completed." Her tendency to follow the rules may have saved her life.

On Dec. 12, 2013, Moody, then just 40 years old, received a call from her radiologist. She had breast cancer.

"I was stunned," said Moody, a Chester resident and teacher at Colonial Heights High School. "I think I actually collapsed on the floor." She called her husband, Scott, who then came home, and the couple broke the news to their two children, Evan and Mallory. "My husband and I decided we needed to tell the children as much as we could without needlessly worrying them," Moody said. "I didn't want them to think that we were keeping secrets from them."

Fortunately, her doctors caught the cancer soon enough to allow her some treatment options. She said the scariest part of her diagnosis and treatment was "making the decision to have a bilateral mastectomy." Although her surgeon recommended a less aggressive option, Moody said she knew she "would not have peace of mind. I wanted to be as aggressive as I could be by having the most extensive surgery." When MRI results revealed "suspicious areas in both breasts," Moody said she felt certain she had made the right decision.

Despite having undergone the most aggressive treatment option available and being cancer-free for nearly five years, Moody said she will always struggle with worry that cancer will return.

“Every time I feel a weird pain or even just feel run down, I worry,” she said. “Every time I have an appointment with my oncologist or surgeons, I worry.” Still, the most difficult part of her diagnosis and treatment was how it would affect her loved ones. The most challenging aspect of her cancer experience was “having to tell my family and friends and know that they might be scared to lose me,” she said.

This type of selflessness is typical of the veteran teacher, active church member, wife and mother. “Early on in the journey,” Moody said, “I asked [God] to use me to help others who are struggling. He has used me in mighty ways. God places us right where we need to be when we offer ourselves to Him.”

Her mastectomy coincided with Lent, and that year, she made it her mission to encourage 40 women (one for each day of Lent) to schedule their mammograms. She kept track of each woman she influenced, including one of her surgeons who was past due in scheduling her test. She then made a point of praying for each of them and their test results.

Moody has also participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure multiple times and supported fundraisers. She also coordinates and promotes Pink-Out Day at Colonial Heights High School to raise awareness of the importance of early detection. She believes in the significance of large-scale efforts and public awareness, but she feels called to help women one-on-one.

When asked how the experience changed her life and perspective, she summed up the answer in one word: gratitude.

“Most of all, I am incredibly thankful that God has used me to support other women and their families through their uncertain, scary times,” she said.

It’s not hard to see that Moody harbors a deep and lasting faith.

“My faith was everything during my healing and recovery,” she said. “My faith in God was only strengthened during this time.”

While Moody understands that people are afraid that cancer will be found during a mammogram, she encourages women to make and attend their appointments.

“If something is there, they need to discover it as soon as possible and get it out of their bodies. Finding cancer too late to treat would be more frightening than finding cancer early and having options,” she said.

She said her cancer diagnosis became one of the best things that has happened to her. It showed her how “amazingly supportive people can be, and how I can help others in ways that really, truly affect their emotional well-

being and peace of mind.”

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ABOUT AUTHOR

AMANDA CREASEY

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1 COMMENT

BONNIE MOODY on OCTOBER 17, 2018 8:45 AM · EDIT

It takes a caring, strong, and committed person to turn a devastating life experience into a teaching moment designated to saving the lives of others in the same situation. Keep doing what you're doing, Terri, as each person you help, will carry on the mission. Prayers for continued good health and thank you for sharing the experience, as early detection can help.

PHONE

(804) 751-0421

EMAIL

news@villagenewsonline.com

ADDRESS

Physical: 11801 Centre Street, Chester, VA 23831 Mail:
PO Box 2397, Chester, VA 23831

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