

I am a 37 year old Wife, Mother, Grandma, Sister, Daughter, Aunt, Friend, College Student...THRIVER, residing in a small rural area surrounded by family and friends, making every day worth living and being a crusader for those who need help.

After talking to my son, Andrew, about how I should write this article on “thriving”, he told me to write what I know. So, what do I know about thriving? One thing I can tell you is that after being diagnosed with breast cancer you can be pessimistic and let it consume you or you can look for the “silver lining” and fight for your life. For me the only thing to do was to fight. I was not going to just lay there and wait for cancer to consume me and take my life. Having a wonderful family and friends has made me fight harder to overcome the obstacles that stood in the way.

I could sit here and tell you about the terrible toll that the surgeries and treatments took on me as well as my loved ones. However, you are probably already aware of the way the body can react, whether you have gone through this yourself, or you have a loved one going through it. While it is difficult and often times heartbreaking with the love and support of those around you, you find a way to carry on. I found strength in looking forward to seeing my children graduate high school, go to college and see them have children of their own. Our oldest son, Scott, graduated this year from high school and watching him walk in line to receive his diploma was a heartwarming sight and a tremendous honor. Our oldest daughter, Amber, gave us our first grandson this year as well. It is amazing to see how he grows and learns from day to day and week to week. Watching our youngest son, Andrew, play baseball is as awe-inspiring as it was when he first played at five years old. Now at 17 he is a marvel to behold. Our youngest daughter, Anna, is taking advantage of an opportunity to go another state for some of her education. She is making us very proud by being responsible and looking towards her own future.

I am lucky enough to have my best friend, Floyd, as my husband. He has been there through every agonizing moment and through all the tears. Holding my hand and letting me cry on his shoulder, never asking for anything in return. Encouraging me to be strong and unyielding to the cancer that struck early in life. Whether we go fishing or just sit outside and watch the sunset we are always together and would not trade each other’s company for anything.

My family has been there as well. For every surgery, whenever I needed to go to a treatment or to just get together to talk or take a trip. We are closer now than we have ever been and learn new things about each other every day. Taking a trip to Vegas with my mom and sister was one of the best experiences that I have ever had and was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity for me. Had it not been for the cancer and the reconnection that we felt we needed from one another we would not have embarked on such an exciting journey. Making sure that we talk or see each other every day is just another way in which our bonds have become even more tightly knit.

People in my community, who were once strangers, are now good friends. Being able to talk about having cancer and remaining a positive person has had a huge effect on those around me. I found that telling my story to those around me made others stronger and want to thrive themselves. On countless occasions, friends and acquaintances have said that I am a positive role model and that I am a hero. I have never seen myself as a hero but if I can help one person then I feel as though I have accomplished something with my life.

Aside from family and friends, one of the most important things in my life now is being a spokesperson for a wonderful organization called PinkRibbonRiders.com. The PinkRibbonRiders help men and women who have breast cancer by providing them with financial assistance. Asked to be the first recipient of

their financial assistance at first annual fundraiser in Wyoming was an honor that found its way to the very core of my being. Not only did they give me the financial aid I needed at the time but gave me a new passion in life. Meeting new people from all over the country has been a thrill that is hard to describe. The men and women that volunteer their time, finances and products from their companies to the PinkRibbonRiders are incredible people. At a time when I felt that the kindness of others was something of the past, they took us into their hearts and showed my husband and myself that overwhelming generosity is as strong and fulfilling as it ever was. As a caregiver, my husband has at times felt he was utterly alone, not knowing what to do and not having anyone else to talk to, especially another man. While he has gladly accepted his role through all of this, it has been difficult for him. He has also found new friends and a support system within this organization that would have been difficult to find elsewhere.

So, what does it mean to me to “thrive”? Flourishing against the odds and maintaining a positive outlook on life. By stepping out of my comfort zone and trying new things and finding a cause to be involved with, I grow as an individual. Being an encouraging and prominent figure in the lives of my family and friends and making a difference by providing comfort and help to those that need it, this is what thriving means to me.

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