

## **Stage 4 - 36 years old - Living and Loving Life!**

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### **Misdiagnosed for 2 years, fighting for 3 years, need a cure NOW!**

For nearly 2 years, I was told by my OBGYN that the lump in my breast was nothing. At the age of 31, he believed I was too young to have breast cancer and EVENTUALLY but oh so reluctantly ordered a mammogram saying "the techs will laugh". No one was laughing when I was diagnosed with stage 3C breast cancer. At the time, my son was 14 months old and I was devastated by the thought of him never knowing me. As a 33 year old woman, strapped with the knowledge that I had a 55% chance of living 5 years, I began my battle on September 13, 2005.

Just days after my diagnosis, my sister Tiffany started "Michelle's Angels". This is a group comprised of friends, family and complete strangers who have donated time and money towards Susan G. Komen's "Race For The Cure". To date, we have raised over \$55,000 towards the fight against breast cancer. With over 120 people joining my team each year and teams walking in DC, Oklahoma, California, Hawaii, Dallas and Austin, the support has been unbelievable.

Unfortunately, this past July, we learned that the cancer has spread...throwing me into stage 4 breast cancer which currently is not curable. My son is 4 years old. At the age of 36, I am NOT ready to throw in the towel! I am back on chemo and praying and fighting for remission. God is good and life is good. I'm living it!

I do not want to waste my cancer. This mess has given me a unique platform that I try to share daily with anyone who will listen:

I am doing everything I can to put a young face on breast cancer. The real point that I want to get out....no, SCREAM out to the world is breast cancer is NOT an old woman's disease. You should not walk but run out of a doctor's office if you're told you are too young. I also want to yell at the top of my lungs that THERE IS LIFE AFTER CANCER & IT IS GOOD!

When you receive a cancer diagnosis, you tend to focus on numbers (what stage? how many lymph nodes? chances of living? etc.) The answer to those questions can be pretty daunting. I like to focus on the following numbers. Nearly 3 years ago, my body became my enemy and presented the challenge of my life. After 5 months of chemo, 6 weeks of radiation, 5 surgeries, 50 pound weight gain and countless shots/pills to induce menopause...well, let's just say my physical and mental state had been a bit compromised. In June, I completed my first triathlon (1/2 mile swim, 12 mile bike and 3.2 mile run). I'm ALIVE...with a few battle scars...but I am here! I am NOT a statistic!! I want to be the smiling face of young cancer survivors...the "exceptional patient". A cancer diagnosis is dark, devastating, scary and ugly. At one point, I didn't know if I would ever laugh again. However, seeing other women living and loving life did wonders for me.

I hope to be an inspiration for others going through this struggle.

Finally, I want to be a part of finding the cure for this terrible disease. WE NEED A CURE NOW! Every day that passes without a cure for breast cancer is one day too late for so many of us. This beast has already stolen the lives of too many mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and friends. We can't bring them back, but we can honor their memory by walking in their name and joining forces to conquer the cancer they worked so hard to beat. Please join me in this fight by walking/donating to "Michelle's Angels". Komen Race For The Cure will be on Sunday, November 2, 2008. Come be a part of something bigger than yourself and let's make history together!!!