

## 2021 Honorary Co-Chairs

Emily Trebil



In the early summer of 2020, I noticed a lump in my breast while doing a routine self-exam. It definitely caught my attention but I had a history of cysts so decided to monitor it for a while. After realizing that it wasn't going away, I scheduled an appointment with my doctor. He then scheduled a mammogram and ultrasound soon after at the Sanford Edith Women's Center in Sioux Falls. I can remember thinking, "I'm sure it's just another cyst and I'll be out of here in no time" even though the thought of cancer lingered in my mind. The mammogram was first, then the ultrasound. I was sitting in the room by myself because visitors were not allowed at the time due to COVID. Then a radiologist walked in the room and said to me, "there's no easy way to say this, but based on your images, I'm positive you have cancer." A biopsy was done that same day and by the next day, on August 19th, my results confirmed that I had HER2 positive Invasive Ductal Carcinoma of the right breast. I was 34 years old.

My team of doctors were fabulous and sprang into action. I was soon scheduled for a portacath placement and started chemo the very next day after that. I continued chemo every 3 weeks for a total of 6 treatments. On Feb 11th, I showed up for my scheduled lumpectomy, but imaging that was done just before surgery showed new spots in my breast. It was unknown if it was cancer or not but we weren't going to take any chances. At this point, a mastectomy was recommended over a lumpectomy. So, I returned a week later and did a double mastectomy with reconstruction. Soon after my mastectomy, I received the best news. that I had a complete response from chemo, which means that my pathology report came back 100 percent free and clear of cancer! I was relieved that radiation would not be necessary.

I continue infusions of maintenance medications every 3 weeks and will do this for a year total which will be in September of this year.

As a nurse, I understand compassion and the importance of helping others, but going through this experience has opened a whole new perspective for me. Words cannot describe how humbled my family and I feel from the amount of support that we received from family, friends, the community, and even people we don't know. I will be forever grateful and in debt to all of you. It has taught me to step up when others are in a time of need and to rely on each other to make it through tough times.

Heart and Sole was one of the first organizations to be there for me and to help us financially. I feel extremely honored to be a part of such an important event and to share my story. I pray that my experience will not only help build me into a stronger person, but to also reflect on others to help them in some way, even if it's just to give them the courage to get a routine screening done. Thank you all for your love and support!

**Keara Hohn**



Every year I pick a word of the year. Do you guys do this? A word that I can focus on and set goals around. I have to believe that in 2018 my word picked me. My word was BRAVE.

In November of 2018 my life changed forever when I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. I had just turned 37 and noticed a small change in my breast. I didn't really think anything of it and kind of pushed it to the side for the time being. I was sure it was nothing and I was too busy to make an appointment, take off work, and all the other excuses I could come up with. It seemed like overnight my "I am sure it is nothing" turned into a "Houston we have a problem" situation. I quickly went to see my primary Dr. who referred me on to Avera. Sometimes in life you just know...and when we were pulled into another room to set up an appointment for an immediate biopsy, I just knew. A week or so later we had a diagnosis of breast cancer. Insert BRAVE!

Cancer comes in all shapes and forms and because I am an overachiever of course my diagnosis contained two different types of cancer. I was diagnosed with one type of cancer in each breast, which made coming up with a treatment plan a little tricky. By the first week of December, we had a

treatment plan and we were ready to kick this thing to the curb. Repeat after me...I AM BRAVE!

I cannot say enough how thankful I am for the staff at the Prairie Center in Sioux Falls. They run a tight ship, but they always made us feel like family. For my treatment I completed 16 Chemo treatments. This includes the Big 6 where I was able to use the Dignicap System to retain the majority of my hair. I can't even begin to explain how cold it is. Regardless of the temperature, this process helped me to remain a slight bit "normal" throughout this time, by not losing all of my hair. I also had 2 big surgeries (out with the old in with the new ), 25 days of radiation, and many many many other appointments. BRAVE BRAVE BRAVE!

I am happy to report that as of my last scan everything is looking good and the Dr.'s are all very pleased with the outcome, as are we.

I know that all of you know someone who has cancer or has been affected by cancer. The reach that this disease has is astronomical. My story definitely isn't any more special than the next. But what I want you to know, is that we prayed for something good to come from this bad thing, no matter the outcome. And I think it has. In 2019 with the help of my community we were able to pack around 40 Chemo Care bags containing a handwritten note card, blanket, journal, lotion, hand sanitizer, Chapstick, Kleenex, puzzle books, pens, markers, hard candy, aspirin, socks, body wipes, and other items to be given out to newly diagnosed cancer patients. We split the bags between Aurora County and the Prairie Center. When you are thrown into the battle the littlest acts of kindness matter the most and I want people to know that they are not fighting alone. In 2020 to celebrate another milestone I again reached out about packing Chemo Care Bags and the community responded. With the help of my family I was able to pack another 40 bags after enjoying Thanksgiving dinner. Due to the pandemic these bags all stayed in Aurora County. I wish these bags never had to be used but I am thankful that they are there when someone is thrown into the fight. Cancer sucks! Don't get me wrong, I never want to go through it again, but my cancer journey has brought me some of the most precious moments in my life. I have been able to help walk others through their journey and share with them mine. More than anything I want others to know that good can come from a bad situation and you are stronger than you think. There is a quote by Ralph Emerson that says "What lies behind you and what lies before you is tiny in comparison to what lies within you." I know you have it within you...GO BE BRAVE!

