

Prepared for Tonisha's site on January 6, 2017.

Journal

Chemo Prep

August 8, 2013

Last week I was on a lovely family vacation in Toronto, Canada. This week I am back in Charlotte prepping to start chemo. I've had extensive blood work done, an echocardiogram, and tomorrow I am having outpatient surgery to have my port-a-cath put in. If I never see a needle or hear "OK, just a tiny prick," It will be too soon. I'm very nervous and tired of surgeries, procedures, and doctors visits. To think I look fine and usually feel fine, but my insides tell a different story. Nevertheless, I'm ready to get this thing started and finished. Prayers up for an uneventful procedure tomorrow and a successful run of chemotherapy.

Port-a-Cath In

August 9, 2013



Today's procedure went well. I'm recovering and in a bit of pain but nothing too bad. No submersion into water, Dr.'s orders...that means the entire summer of 2013 I was unable to get in a body of water. First it was because I had a large wound on my thigh that took 4 months to heal. Then because my lung biopsy kept me out of water for a week. And now this new device has to settle in which takes about 2 weeks. Sad times but next summer I'll be a fish.

Looking forward to celebrating Julia's bday on Sunday with all her August-born cousins. And hoping the weather cooperates for a pool party on Wednesday evening so she can celebrate with her friends.

Happy Friday and hope you have an amazing weekend because I'm definitely going to try my best to.

T

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Charleston Love

August 11, 2013

The port is in and we had a wonderful weekend in Charleston. My sister and her son came up from Atlanta and my cousin Kelli and her family came down from Maryland to celebrate the kids birthdays. Griffin turned 2 in July and Julia turned 5 today, while Marshall and Kaidyn turn 5 & 4, respectively, within the next week. It's always nice to get the kids together. That's the only way they'll form lifelong relationships and make memories together. This was the first time all four of them were together at once. The weekend wouldn't have been complete without a trip to the beach. The weather was perfect and we had a blast in the water, making castles, and being silly. Then we came home and had a birthday celebration complete with cake and ice cream, pizza, and gifts. The day couldn't have gone any smoother.

It's always so refreshing to be with family and make new memories and laugh about the old. I've always cherished family time but being sick puts everything into perspective. At the end of everyday I like to think about my peaks and pits of the day. Every single day my peaks run circles around my pits and this weekend was no exception. My neck was causing me some discomfort, but I didn't let that keep me from anything, including wobbling at my cousin's graduation & birthday party.

Although I don't feel or look sick, something changes inside you when you are diagnosed with cancer. Every ache on any part of my body makes me wonder "is it spreading?" I've adopted a new alkaline diet which is supposed to help fight cancer. It's really the only thing I can control so I'm all about it. It's very difficult, time consuming, and limited, but I feel that it can only benefit me. It should also decrease some of the chemo side effects. I can eat organic foods including veggies, nuts, lentils, and a small amount of fruit and lean meat and fish. The key is to cut out sweets, starches, dairy, and most oils. That meant I couldn't enjoy pizza, cake, ice cream, grits, croissants, sandwiches, juice, cheese, or Any of the other foods on the menu over the weekend. Thankfully my sister and mom got lots of fresh fruits and veggies so I was able to stick as closely to my plan as possible. Some have offered to stand in solidarity with me by adopting this new lifestyle, too. Please, be my guest. I'd love for others to share in this experience. One of my line sisters, Jasmyn, came to help me a few months ago and she made veganism look so easy. I'm following her lead, even bought a tool to make veggies look like pasta.

All in all, despite everything going on I'm continually in awe of God's work in my life. He has given me the best support system headed by my Husband, Dad, Mom, sister And Mother-in-Law. I also have a host of family and friends, including you, who make these difficult days bearable. I so look forward to spending QT with anyone who will make time. The text messages, calls, emails, letters, packages, meals, and prayers keep a smile on my face. Of course my sweet daughter Julia and my handsome son EJ keep me smiling, too. Sometimes when EJ wakes in the middle of the night and I'm so sleepy and mad that he needs to be fed, he gives me that two-dimple smile that makes everything just right. Thank you, Thank you, thank you from all sides of my heart.

Please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

T

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Rough Patch

August 13, 2013

Yesterday was a difficult one for me. I am scheduled to travel to Duke this week to see a Sarcoma Specialist for a second opinion. Isn't it so odd? It seems like this is what I read about or hear about, but never did I EVER imagine this would be my story. Nevertheless, my oncologist in Charlotte thinks it's a good idea and knows the Dr. I'll see at Duke. Hopefully I'll have a definite game plan and start chemo on Monday. When researching the new doctor I looked at some of his published work and got very discouraged all of a sudden. I reached out to some of my closest girlfriends who assured me that God will deliver healing to my body if I continue to pray and believe. My husband also reminded me that we have no time or energy to put into negative thoughts and we must speak healing and positivity into my situation. I feel much better today after much prayer and encouraging talks. EJ and Julia also cheered me up; Julia with her songs and vibrance and EJ with his smile and gurgling...and how could I forget his upchucking of milk all over me followed by laughter.

Keep praying!!!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Duke University

August 16, 2013

Yesterday Ed, Denise, and I went up to Duke Cancer center to meet with the sarcoma specialist for a second opinion. He agreed with the course of treatment we are on and was very insightful regarding the diagnosis, the expectations, and next steps. It was very helpful to hear a different perspective and very reassuring that he agrees with my Doctor and our action plan.

Monday is the big day. I have chemo for a whopping 6hrs. What will I do with myself for that long. If anyone has an scripture verses or book suggestions please send them to me. My email address is tbaenterprise@gmail.com

On Wednesday we had Julia's 5th birthday party at our neighborhood pool and it was a huge success. She had a

wonderful time and was so excited to have all of her close friends there.

This weekend we don't have much planned except going to the farmer's market to stock up on organic and local veggies and fruit. I've been doing really well with my lifestyle change. Been cutting back on meats, completely cut out dairy and sweets, and eating a ton of vegetables and fruit. I even discovered that freshly squeezed carrot juice tastes pretty good.

On Sunday evening, my neighbor and her prayer group will have a special prayer session with me before I start chemotherapy. How wonderful is that. And to think, I met this amazing neighbor, Maria, while walking GoGo one afternoon because our dogs look like brothers. She has been wonderful to me and my family, helping whenever and wherever we need her, coming over to visit, cooking me wonderful meals, taking Julia to the park, and loving on baby EJ. She is truly an angel.

Please continue to pray for me and my family! Thanks so much and have a wonderful weekend.

Tonisha

Prayed Up!

August 18, 2013



Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of The Lord. James 5:14

Today was a wonderful day. I literally couldn't stop smiling and feeling love and joy all around. I was sad to see one of my best friends, Denise, head back to DC, but I was so happy that she came and spent time with us. I love to see Ed bond with my friends from college and high school.

Today I feel sufficiently prayed up! At church a friend prayed over me and this afternoon my good friend, Maria, held a prayer group at her home with some wonderful ladies from our neighborhood. These were also the same ladies who brought food and other goodies over three times a week after my surgeries in March and May. God has put the most amazing Prayer warriors in my life. I left the prayer group feeling like I was surrounded by Angels. Seriously, I haven't felt this way since Mama Dell Prayed over me with oils before I delivered EJ. It is THE BEST feeling in the world.

Tomorrow is the big day and I'm feeling confident and positive. Looking forward to getting this started and being one step closer to finishing. Please continue praying for us!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Chemo Day 1

August 19, 2013

Chemo went well today but at about 5:30pm I started to feel the wrath. I'm tired, nauseous, and irritable. The trash can and bottles of water are my best friends. Will post more tomorrow but I'm fine. Thanks again for the prayers and well wishes.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Chemo Day 1 Recap

August 20, 2013



Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Roman 5: 2-5

Yesterday was the gift and the curse. The gift because the only way this thing is gonna get better is chemo. The curse because chemo wreaks havoc on your body, your life and the lives of everyone close to you.

Immediately after getting chemo I felt warm inside. I was good all afternoon until 5:30pm. Suddenly I felt hot and flustered. Then I just felt ill. I started regretting my lunch choice, peeling of clothes and needed cold water immediately. I stumbled in the house with EJ, handed him off to Grandma Golden and plopped on the couch. The change in my body, my tone, my facial expressions was instant. I made my way to the bed, grabbed some meds and the trash can, drank more water and went to bed. About an hour or so later I woke up with no relief. Julia was tiptoeing in my room looking for her stuff, "oh mommy you are awake," followed by a big hug and kiss. Simply Heaven!

The new goal is to get EJ to sleep through the night instead of waking up every 3 hrs to eat. It's torture for me, especially now since I'm up randomly every few hours for my own issues.

It was a very hard decision to decide whether or not to post my caring bridge site on FB. On FB I have a million friends but are they really friends? So many people who read my blog or emails say I'm inspirational. Ha! It's funny to me but I like it. I use this site as an outlet. My husband says I overshare but It makes me feel good to know that people are with me in this fight. Right now I need all the good feelings I can get. I'm just a wife, mother, daughter, and friend trying to get through this difficult period. The past few years have been considerably rocky for me. I do get frustrated. I have moments when I get upset for my family, especially my two precious children. So I must fight. But the battle is not mine. I'm merely a vessel God is using to show his greatness. And all you wonderful people around me are just the same.

Thinking positive thoughts about tomorrow and hoping for the best at my 6wks scan. Thanks again for your continued prayers. I need all I can get.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

I can't tell a lie...

August 23, 2013

It's been a rough couple of days. The nausea, vomiting, rhea, tiredness, and simply ill feelings are beginning to subside. At one point I thought I'd have to go back for fluids, but I prevailed. Not on my own, but with the help of my family, friends, neighbors, etc. Wednesday was the pits, Thursday we had to call in reinforcement and Mama Dell and Jamison showed up right on time. Last night as I was lying in bed I caught a glimpse of my tall, dark, and handsome husband and thought to myself "girl, you besta get it together." So today, despite the ill feelings I put on a happy face and pulled myself together long enough to go to Julia's open house and grab a bite to eat. That totally wiped me out and I'm back in bed now, but I'm very happy.

I'm so glad to have such a supportive circle of fam and friends. The calls, text messages, cards, packages, play dates with Julia, ginger ale, tea, salads, juices, every little thought, prayer, good vibe, and positive affirmations are helping me get through this. I apologize for not responding in a timely fashion but these meds knock me out on top of just feeling whipped at all times. I'm still happy, though. I just keep imagining lil soldiers in my body trapping and confining the cancerous cells. I pray for healing, I visualize healing, I believe I'm being healed. This is going to work out in my favor. Thank you again for everything!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Say So

August 28, 2013



Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; (Psalms 107:2 KJV)

Sunday's church service at the Park South was especially touching. Bishop Alexander preached from the above scripture and admonished the redeemed to speak up about the goodness of The Lord. I hope this journal continually highlights my personal experiences with the goodness of God. Last week was a rough one for me. It could have been so much worse, but tons of people came to my rescue. Every time I felt like I couldn't make it, I just asked God for strength, relief, a moment of clarity. And here it is, Hump day and I'm still going with a smile on my face. All I can say is "God is good."

Tomorrow my sweet baby Julia starts Kindergarten in a Mandarin immersion program at our local elementary school. I am so happy for her. I'm so excited about the doors it will open for her future and the additional friends she'll be able to make from her new language skills. I want nothing more for my children than to experience the different people, cultures, and countries of the world. My parents exposing me at a young age led to me living in Japan as an adult, which was one of the best experiences of my life. I'm looking forward to traveling to China led by my tall, beautiful brown, mandarin speaking princess. She's gonna be a celebrity.

EJ is trying to crawl...he's on the cusp. He gets up on all fours and then falls over with laughter. It's so cute. But what isn't cute is him not sleeping through the night. Send suggestions pls!!! Help me, help him!

This weekend is the LowCountry Jazz Fest in Charleston sponsored by Closing the Gap in Health Care, Inc.

Friday night we are taking Julia to see an All female group, talk about Girls on Fire! I'm looking forward to beach days and Jazz nights. I'm also looking forward to connecting with friends and fam in Charleston and spending time with Mom and Dad. With all these wonderful things coming up, I'm too blessed to be stressed. And since I'm leaning on The Lord "I ain't got no worries."

Thanks again for your continued thoughts and prayers. We are getting through this because of prayer warriors like you all over the place. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!!!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Beach Days and Not So Jazzy Nights

August 30, 2013



It's Friday!!! I had huge weekend plans. Mainly Beach Days and Jazz Nights. Unfortunately low white blood counts have derailed my plans. I shouldn't be out amongst the public because of germs. A low white blood

count means my body can't fight off infection. So what I'd normally not be effected by could throw me into the hospital. In the words of my Favorite internet sensation "Ain't nobody got time for that." So, I'll only be able to go to one night of the jazz fest AND I have to wear a mask. Don't even get me started.

As for beach days, I'll be in the most remote area but I'll be taking in the sand and surf. Julia, Kelli and I are ready, after all this will be my first time in a body of water all summer. Score! I'm telling you, if you continue to count the little wins, there is no way you can consider yourself a loser.

Julia's first day of school was a success. She is in class with a neighbor, which is really nice. And when I asked her who her friend of the day was, of course it was him. That made me smile. Two other kids from her preschool will be in her class, too. I'm also happy to report that she not only knows Ni Hao, but also a Mandarin jingle that she says means "you're awesome." Not sure if I believe that but if so, what a great first jingle to learn.

EJ is teething but still the happiest baby alive. And since he's surrounded by all grandparents this weekend he is getting spoiled beyond belief. Julia, too, for that matter. Oh well, you only live once and it's the last weekend of summer. It's a celebration!!! Make it a great weekend! Love, peace and blessings to all! If you see me and I blow air kisses and wave don't be offended. I must stay away from THE DREADFUL GERMS. ????

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Thinking of the worthwhile and Worthy of Praise

September 2, 2013



Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. (Philippians 4:8)

Labor Day Weekend 2013 goes down in the books as one of the best holiday weekends yet. I had so many wonderful experiences with so many wonderful people. It was as if God was shining a spotlight on me all weekend. Once again I felt blessed.

The 5th Annual Low Country Jazz Festival was great, as usual. I went two nights but my favorite night was Friday. Jazz in Pink was so good. The violinist, Karen Briggs, was spectacular. Please please please YouTube her. She played the violin with such fervor, she made it talk, sing, percolate, etc. She gave me chills. Dave Koz & Friends was also superb. The energy during their performance was electrifying.

The best thing about the weekend was spending time with my family and friends. I had two great breakfasts with my Dad and his brothers and sister. My grandmother, Hattie Lillian, would have been so happy. I'm sure she was in heaven smiling and saying "bless your heart." One of the blessings that has come from cancer is getting to know people better and forming deeper relationships with them. When I was first diagnosed my Aunt Veta came down to help me and it was so nice spending time and getting to know her better. She is very sweet and quiet, but at breakfast I learned that she is also very opinionated. I LOVED it. Now I know how she held her own growing up with my Dad, Uncle Gary, and Uncle Reggie.

On Saturday we had girls day downtown. Mommy, Julia, Kelly, Tiffany, Melodie and I hit King street for retail therapy. It was a much needed release for all of us. Later I met up with my friend Lexi, who I've been friends

with since 5th grade. Now we are both married with children and both our daughters and husbands have become friends. It's a beautiful thing.

On Sunday I facilitated a group walk across the bridge in Charleston. Everyone knows walking the bridge is one of my favorite things to do in Charleston. Unfortunately due to my current issues, I was unable to join the group in the walk, but afterwards joined them for breakfast at Okra Grill. Out of the group, it was the first time for 4. And of course, the men tried to run it...the best part for me was seeing the group, especially the fellas, struggle to walk, sit and stand later in the day.

I was so happy to see my Mom getting around and resuming normal activities. After spending 3 months in the hospital and months recovering, she is now able to hit King Street again like old times. Did I mention God is Good?

Everyday I get messages from people saying how inspirational I am and in awe of how I stay positive during this trying time in my life. Honestly, I don't have a choice. Being negative has never been one of my personality traits. I do get upset, scared, mad, and sad occasionally. I go in my closet and I cry, whine, and sulk. I usually have a 3-minute window before Julia comes looking for me or EJ notices I'm no longer in his presence. And that's usually all I need. I get it out of my system, wipe my eyes, say a prayer, and put on a happy face. I have way more reasons to be happy than sad. All the things I mentioned above, those make me so happy. Waking up makes me happy, because a lot of people didn't. Waking up with little or no pain, that's the start to a wonderful day. I can't fully enjoy the good if I'm worrying and holding on to the bad. Plus, there is no need for that. My faith sustains me. I can't be faithful if I'm doubting and worrying. When I look back on this weekend, so many things could have gone astray, but they didn't. As I sit reflecting on the laughs, the hugs, the meaningful conversations, the kind, encouraging words that people shared with me, I can only be happy and thankful. When I think about all the little wins worthy of praise, I know God is working this out for me. And when I saw the bald spot in my head this evening and I laughed, I immediately knew I was leaning on The Lord because if I were in this by myself, I would have been a mess. My mantra for this week "No Hair, Don't Care."

Thanks again for your continued prayers, cards, calls, texts, packages, crabcakes, flowers, edible arrangements, thoughts, bible verses, books, and words of encouragement. They help make each day brighter. Now, I'll also be accepting wigs ;)

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Ask and You Will Recieve

September 5, 2013

So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you. (Luke 11:9)

I am so grateful to everyone who continues to pray for me and with me. It means so much during this time. This week I've been feeling great and trying to get everything in order for next week, my second of six rounds of chemo. This includes cleaning the house, washing a ton of clothes, grocery shopping, and getting things ready to make it a little easier for Ed. One thing I've been struggling with is how to explain this situation to Julia, an inquisitive 5 year old. She often asks why I go to the doctor so much or why I'm sick. I try not to use the "C" word around her but trying to explain what is going on is difficult. To be honest I don't really understand. All I know is these bad cells are trying to take over my good cells. How do I explain why mommy will be bald within the next week? When I told her my hair was coming out she said "mommy, I don't want you to have no hair." It broke my heart. Honestly, I was surprised that something that simple could mean so much. I tried to explain that since I won't have hair I can wear pretty scarves and different wigs everyday. She thought that was cool. Crisis avoided!

As I get closer to my 6wk CT Scan I find myself praying harder and being extremely specific in my prayers. I ask that GOD stop the growth and heal my lungs and my leg. I ask that every organ, tissue, and cell in my body begin to function in the perfection in which God created them to function. I often look at my battle wounds (ie skin graft, huge abdominal/thigh incision scar, etc.) and think of how far I've come. I made it through that rough time...another 15wks is cake. At least that's what I tell myself. Mind over matter. The power of positive thinking is real.

Please continue praying for me and my entire family. My mother and I are both undergoing chemotherapy. Please pray for my husband's continued strength and fortitude and for my precious children who just want normalcy. Thanks so much.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Suffering through your Pit to get to your Palace

September 12, 2013



On Monday I had my 2 of 6 chemotherapy infusion. This time I was a bit more prepared but the ill feelings and extreme tiredness are really wearing me out. Luckily Roddell is here to help with the kids and my neighbors and friends have been dropping off meals, flowers and coming by to cheer me up. I am blessed beyond measure. And every week despite her own ailments my mother sends me the sweetest get well soon cards with updates, even though I talk to her just about daily.

On Saturday evening I visited Maria's church. The sermon was written for me. It was as if God knew I would be there and wanted me to hear that word. It was entitled "suffering through your pit to get to your palace." Everyone has a different pit, right now mine is cancer and chemotherapy. This is like a perpetual roller coaster of emotions. One week I'm down, one week I'm up and one week I'm in limbo about how to feel. It's very easy to get distracted by the ill feelings, the "why me's," the "but I'm only 32." On the other hand, it's very easy to pick up my bible, read a scripture recommended by a friend, meditate on a daily devotion, think about the plans God has for me, or simply think about all my prayer warriors around the globe who are praying and rooting for me daily. During this time so many people have shown me love, kindness, compassion, and help. I get a sense of calm after saying a prayer and handing this situation back over to him. God's work is evident to me through you. I am extremely humbled that you all include me by name in your prayers to God. There is no greater gift and I thank you.

On Saturday night a friend of mine from high school, Tyler Deas, passed away. This has been weighing heavily on my heart since I heard the news. Tyler and I were close in high school and drifted apart during college, but

she always held a special place in my heart. She was so full of life, fun, free-spirited, and she didn't take anything from anyone. The only sense of respite from her untimely passing is knowing that she is free of all chains and at peace for once. Please keep her family in your prayers through this difficult time.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Temporary Setback

September 16, 2013



This past week was quite difficult for me. Of course chemo was hard on my body but I also suffered some downward trends in my mood and attitude. It's very difficult to stay positive when your feeling ill, other things in life aren't peachy keen, your partner isn't feeling 100% (cancer effects your entire family), the house is messy... You know, simply life. In church the other day the preacher urged us in the midst of life not to take a "whoa is me" attitude but to instead focus on the goodness of God and keep praising him. I'd say this week alone I've had about 200 conversations with God, asking him for peace, forgiveness, healing, of course, and

mercy. Again I'm thankful for all of your encouraging words, prayers, and thoughtful gestures.

In other exciting news EJ is mobile. He's not crawling but he's getting around, sitting up, and making his presence known. It's so beautiful to see Julia and EJ interact. She's so caring, gentle and protective. She is the best big sister EVER.

Today was the last day our neighborhood pool was open and I took Julia and her friend to the pool. To my delight and surprise, despite canceling her swimming lessons because of all that I have going on, my baby is able to swim. She was jumping in, swimming across the pool, going down the slide, swimming to the side. I am so excited for her.

This week I'm looking to turn a corner in terms of how I'm feeling physically and emotionally. Right now my tongue is going through some things. My taste buds are hyper sensitive and my throat is closed up a bit. Everything I put in my mouth tastes funny and the only thing that is bearable is milk. Between the bouts of sickness, my tongue and mouth sores, body aches, tiredness, my upcoming CT Scan, and mental drain, I'm barely keeping it together. This is by far the most difficult thing I've ever experienced in my life. I wish cancer on no one. Please continue to pray for us. I know this is just a temporary setback and this week is going to be much better than last. The power of positivity. Look at that, I just experienced a little win. EJ put himself back to sleep. Winning!!!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Come unto Me...

September 19, 2013

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

A nice lady sent me this bible verse the other day when I was feeling down. It immediately gave me a sense of peace. This bible verse is my absolute favorite song by Take 6. And, just as God would have it, Take 6 is coming to Charlotte next weekend and I'm going, mask and all :)

Today I'm heading to the doctor again. On Monday my white blood cell counts were low so I'm back to masking up, staying away from the public, and hosing Julia down in the front yard before she comes in from school. In my next home I'm definitely putting a shower in the mudroom. Hopefully my counts will have increased and I can get this pesky tongue examined. It's still not working properly and I'm half way to my next round of chemo.

This week started off rough but it's getting better thanks to y'all! Daily I receive a package. I wait til Julia comes home and we open them together. We've been having a blast modeling earrings, scarves, trying new makeup and nail polish, eating the snacks, and reading the beautiful cards and scriptures. I'm so blessed!!! People I haven't spoken to in ages are coming out of the wood works. I know some think FB is the devil, but if used properly it's really the opposite.

I recently started purging and decluttering my house. This is a hefty project. Today we recycled about 100 magazines. I'm always holding on to stuff but I'm letting that go. It's so easy to find joy in things, but what really matters are people and how they make you feel. If anyone knows someone in need of clothes, shoes, household items, baby stuff, girl's stuff, etc. pls let me know. I'd love to pass these items along to someone in need.

Ed's tension/stress headaches are better this week and we are looking forward to a low key family weekend. Julia and I are planning to do some art while the boys watch football. Hopefully the Gamecocks will get the win and the Panthers won't embarrass us this weekend.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

CT Scan Results Unfavorable

September 25, 2013

I was hoping and praying for good news on my CT Scan today. I knew in my heart that the chemo wasn't working after I developed a cough about 2 wks ago. It's so disheartening. At this point it's very difficult to be positive and upbeat. This is the worst I've felt yet. Ever since I received that call my heart has been so low. Today has been rough. I appreciate all the encouraging messages and supportive comments I've been receiving.

We'll move on to plan B, I'm not even sure what that is. This just sucks. I'm feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders. Why can't my body just act right? Why isn't the medicine working? Ugh, I could go on and on with these sorts questions.

Tomorrow is a new day! I'm looking forward to putting this day behind me and having a fresh outlook. I hope God will answer my prayers. Looking at my perfect little family today was very difficult. I don't want to leave them. I'm just going to keep praying and I hope you will do the same. Thanks

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Be Strong and Brave

September 30, 2013



I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the Lord your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

Last week I hit a rough patch. As much as I wanted to be strong, positive, and joyous, I couldn't. Although I had a few bad days, I never lost the faith. I have many questions and what ifs, but at this point I'm really turning to God. Every time I get upset, discouraged, down on myself, sad, weepy, I turn to my bible. I now keep a devotional with me at all times because I never know when I might need to read a word to get myself together. Every day I feel a little stronger because I'm praying and believing. This diagnosis has been a nightmare from day 1. My husband and I are really leaning on each other like no other. He's such a good person and every time I look at him I give myself cuddos. I wish there was a way I could let him know how much he means to me; Sometimes it feels like a hug, "I love you" and "thank you" just aren't enough.

This week I started my new chemo today. It's time consuming; 5 full days! Fun fun! After day 1 I'm happy to report the side effects aren't that bad. I have Ed and my cousin, Jamesetta, here to help. She even lets EJ sleep

with her so we can get a full night's rest. So sweet!

EJ started crawling last week. Now he's pulling up and really not concerned with crawling. He's trying to walk. Julia is loving the Mandarin program, singing Mandarin songs to her brother, and full of life. We are so blessed!

Again, thanks for everything!!! Please continue praying for healing. Yesterday I met with a Reiki and holistic consultant and I decided right then that I'm Choosing Life. In choosing life, I've chosen to be vegan. I'll do whatever it takes to be here! Come one, come all! Let's be vegan! Lol. Just kidding! Goodnight y'all.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Chemo day 4/5

October 3, 2013

Today I was sitting here getting chemo and talking to one of my close friends. We were talking about her recent trip to Puerto Rico and her upcoming job interviews and different things she got going on and coming up. I was listening to all these wonderful things and afterwards I got a little upset. 2 years ago at this time I had just gotten laid off at Bank of America, thinking it was the end of the world, as I boarded a flight to India for a dear friend's wedding. A year ago today I was worried about my brand new pregnancy, hoping it would end in birth. Now, I'm worrying about my health, hoping God will answer my prayers and heal me. My, how my struggles have changed. Today I'm sitting here hooked up to IVs for the 4th of 5 days, getting chemo #2. I want so much to have smaller, simpler worries...flat tires, burnt meals, forgot to drop off lunch, etc. My issues are too big for me to comprehend. 7 months since initial diagnosis and I'm just as confused but even more scared now. Don't get me wrong, I'm faithful and leaning on God but I can still be scared. My Friend Chanel says "it's not about waiting for the storm to past. It's about learning how to dance in the rain." I love this quote because I'm definitely free-spirited enough to dance in the rain. My dance consists of doing fun things with Julia, trying to get EJ to walk since it's obvious he wants it so bad, and being the best wife, daughter, and sister I can be. Chemo weeks keep me down but come Monday I'll be back! Like what chemo? Chemo who?

Please stay prayerful. #choosinglife #danceintherain #GODsgotthis

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Fresh & Raw Only!

October 7, 2013



Last week was the pits. I spent 5 days in chemo at the doctor's office. Every evening at home was a blur. I basically went from the car to the bed and woke up the next day to do it all again. This weekend was similar. I spent the entire weekend resting. Anyone who knows me knows that this eats me up inside. I wanted to go to the pumpkin patch, grocery store, and Nordstrom but my body wouldn't allow it. At some points I was lying in bed thinking "just get up" and an hour later, I was still in the same position. Today, however, I'm feeling more energized. I'm happy as usual but not looking forward to going to the doctor's office for a check up. They are very nice, but I'd love to go two whole weeks without seeing them. The sight on the chemo suite makes me sick.

I mentioned before that I'm making a lifestyle change. Well, my husband has decided to join me. We are vegans in the making. Not only are we vegans, but for now we are only ingesting raw, fresh, or unprocessed foods. That means we are only eating fruits and veggies...that means not only are we hungry all the time, but everything must be prepared at time of consumption. Fun!!! We really appreciate everyone bringing food and treats, but we respectfully request uncooked fruits and vegetables only. That hurt to type. Cause I love tasty food... But I love living more! We would love to eat your delicious cakes, pies, casseroles, pastas, etc. but we are doing something radical at 823 and we don't need any temptations. Thanks for your support.

As far as other news, we have been blessed beyond belief with meals, care packages, jewelry, scarves, at-home help, child care, cards, prayers, juices, etc. Sometimes I have to pinch myself like "Gosh, people really do like me. Maybe I really am a rockstar." But seriously, all the love and support has been amazing. It oftentimes brings me to tears when I think of the goodness and kindness of human beings. This has undoubtedly changed me as a person. What I used to think of as important just doesn't hold the same weight. My realm of reality is totally different now. I'm much closer to God, have strengthened relationships with friends, and have formed new bonds. And obviously I'm a bald bombshell :)

Looking forward to two wonderful weeks without chemo filled with lots of fresh fruits, vegetables, and hunger pains. Thanks for everything! Keep praying!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Houston Here I Come!!!

October 15, 2013



So much has happened over the past week. I finally got an appointment at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Sarcoma is very rare cancer and they have a world renowned center to fight the disease. Shortly after getting the news of my confirmed appointment, the excitement wore off when I was told that my insurance would only cover approximately 16% of the consultation, testing and treatment. I was mortified when I found out the approximate cost of consultation and testing, not even treatment, was approximately \$20,000 to be delivered by cash, check, or money order before being seen. Talk about devastation. My father has been working diligently with his medical connections to try and help the situation. We are still hoping for good news prior to my appointment on Wednesday morning regarding possible discounts or insurance coverage. I keep thinking "if \$20K is the price of testing, what will the cost of treatment be?" I can't even think about it because it's depressing. It's like watching everything you've worked hard to save for gone in just one instant. I'm not even going to get on my Obamacare soap box but I'm one of the people who will greatly benefit. When my COBRA ended in May, I was denied by every single insurance company because of my pre-existing condition. The only insurance I could get was a NC high risk policy for people in my similar situation whose insurance coverage was ended by no fault of their own. I'm thankful for it but wish it was more comprehensive.

Getting to this moment of boarding the plane was a total group effort. My husband has been my rock, feeding me positivity and encouragement. My parents have supported me and are working in the background trying to make this happen. My friends and family have come to my house and sat with me, made me laugh to get my mind off this craziness, cleaned up, prayed with me, and helped me organize and get things ready for this trip. My neighbors have dropped off goodies for Julia and will help Ed while I'm away.

In the midst of this madness I've managed to stay on the vegan diet, even when I made some mac and cheese that Julia proclaimed was "the best mac and cheese I've ever made." I've eaten out a few times and steered clear of the meat and cheeses...even passed up a mixed drink. Now that's will power. I'm an expert at making guacamole and look forward to trying raw recipes from the books people have sent me. I tried wearing a wig...it's just not me. I'll stick to my cute earrings and tons of wonderful L'Oreal makeup and nail polishes.

I started a fundraising website to help with my ever increasing medical costs. Thank you to all those who have already donated and to anyone considering it. Please forward both my websites to all your family and friends. Not only am I in need of donations but also prayers. Please call the 700 club, put my name on prayers lists in your community, and tell people my story. It's too often that young people are diagnosed with cancer or other diseases and are looking for someone to relate to. I'm a young women who was living life like it's golden, happily pregnant, and out of nowhere an ache and small bump on my thigh turned my life upside down. I will never forget the day when my surgeon called from Charleston with the news...And since then we are a different family. I'm still living life like it's golden, but it's different. My golden weeks and days are marred by weeks and days of chemo side effects. Nevertheless on good days we celebrate, we laugh, we hug. We enjoy the simple things in life... And when this is all over we'll get back to the champagne life and look back on these days at how far we've come and how strong they made us. Our testimony will change lives!

Watch out Houston, I'm headed your way! Prayers up!!

Please support #TeamTBellAlston | Medical Expenses - YouCaring.com <http://www.youcaring.com/medical-fundraiser/-teambellalston/96899>

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Houston: Bittersweet

October 21, 2013



God is Good, All the time. And All the time, God is Good.

Where do I start? Houston was bittersweet. The Sarcoma Specialist was very kind and sensitive to the fact that I'd be responsible for 84% of the costs incurred at MD Anderson. She was also sensitive to the fact that I have two young children that I need to be with. So we've decided to continue treatment in Charlotte and use her as a consultant. I may have no choice in the future but to go back to MD Anderson, but for now I'll be in Charlotte. The bitter part of the visit was that I was told that due to the aggressive nature of my cancer that I'll be on chemo for the rest of my life. I remain hopeful and optimistic and of course I'm leaning on The Lord. It was very hard to hear some things that the Doctor said. She's worked with many patients but she's never worked with me. She's unaware that I'm different. I've got a light within me that can't be smothered by a cancer

diagnosis. I've also got an army of prayers warriors behind me. Right now and even after I get past this I've got to continue telling my story and letting people know about sarcoma. But more importantly, I've got to let people know how God can beam a bright light in a dark place. How God can put people in your life that will be a blessing and how people will come out of the woodworks to support you in your time of need. So needless to say, some things I had to leave in that office.

I cut my trip to Texas short so that I could come home and spend time with my family before chemo this week. We had so much fun going to fall festivals and picnicking in the front yard, enjoying the nice weather and getting Vitamin D. We also enjoyed a family vegan meal on Sunday!!!

Last week I started a fundraising site on Monday night before leaving for Texas. In 6 short days the site has raised over \$20K. That is nothing but God. I thank every person that has contributed, forwarded the site, shared on FB, said a prayer, or sent positive vibes my way. I'm so overwhelmed by your participation and generosity. I had no idea that giving was contagious!!! Thank you!!! The funds will be used for my exorbitant medical bills. Being sick is expensive...the co-pays, prescriptions, scans, chemo, hospital bills, etc. are a lot. Even my short trip to Texas was expensive. I'm so blessed to have all your love and support. And all those people that are starting other fundraiser for me in Charleston, Charlotte, and the DMV, I appreciate it all!!

This week I'm in chemo all week, M-Th 9-5. It's depressing, cold, and boring. Please pray for continued healing and strength. Make it a great week!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Something within Me

October 23, 2013



I've been a huge fan of Take 6 since middle school. I had no idea I was jamming to Gospel for a long time. The music. The singing was so good. Acapella or not, I just couldn't get enough. One of my favorite songs that rings true now, especially during this difficult time, is called "Something Within Me." Here are a few of the lyrics but feel free to look this up on YouTube to hear the greatness that it is.

All that I know
I thank my God
I've got something within me

Something with me, Lord
That holdeth the reins
Something within me
That banishes pain
Something within me, Lord
That I can't explain
All I know I thank my God
I've got something within me

I've got something within me, oh yeah
Jesus gave me something, oh yeah

Have you got something
Somebody said it's hope
Somebody said it's peace
Somebody said joy
All I know is that nobody can take it away
Jesus gave it and it's here to stay
It's deep down

I honestly believe that Jesus gave me something that is within me that keeps me going, keeps me smiling, and gives me peace and joy. Cause these days are rough!!! Not even physically. Just emotionally and psychologically. I'm fighting a cancer within me with faith and hope, which is also within me. Some days when I want to be down, when I want to lie in bed, here come my two babies. They want hugs, Kisses, bottles, Cheerios, and to spend QT with me. Or my husband will do something sweet. Or I'll get a sweet card, gift, call, text message, visit, or gift basket. And I can't stay sad, I must smile and keep it moving, cherishing each day.

Chemo this week hasn't been fun but Its almost lunchtime of day 3/4. Praise The Lord!!! I'm so close, and I haven't shed a tear in here yet... #lookatGOD

Thanks for your thoughts and prayers! I love and appreciate all that you are and all that you do. Please pray for my mother who is in the hospital in Charleston. She's fighting pneumonia. We are fighting but we've got that Julia Murray Spirit in us. We got this!!!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

A Step in the Right Direction

November 9, 2013



This has been the best week I've had in months. Not only have my friends been visiting, but, I finally had a little good news. My CT Scan revealed that I'm responding to the chemotherapy. I'm not in the clear yet. I've still got 4 more treatments before I get a short break but I'm so happy that the meds are working. Not only that, but since starting on this second chemo my side effects are much more bearable and I'm not on any additional medications, except the occasional antibiotics. By bearable I mean instead of suffering from 7-10 side effects, I'm experiencing 5-6. Extreme fatigue is the worst and it lasts for about 5 days after treatment. Since I'm responding, I'm now in chemo 5 days from 8-5. Yes, they added an extra day and an hour to each day. Although not happy about it, I'm excited that I'm responding. I'll do whatever it takes to be here until old age:)

Prayer works! Positive thinking works! Healthy eating works! I'm forging onward with my vegan diet. Now it's not so bad. I crave salmon sashimi...and sometimes I want chicken wings, but overall I don't feel like I'm missing much. The other night we had dinner at a friend's house and she made a beautiful paella with chicken, sausage, shrimp, mussels, and lobster tail. I was so upset because I couldn't eat any. But then, she pulled out some vegan goodies just for me. Vegan crabcakes, wild rice pilaf with cranberries and pecans, salad and marinated collards. Yummy! It was the first meal that I didn't feel like I was slighted compared to everyone else. It gave me hope. It gave me life. Not to mention my holistic coach came over last week and spent several hours showing me how to prepare nutritious and tasty vegan food. I've also been drinking alkaline water. A friend drops it off twice a week for me. And I've got neighbors who drop off yummy vegan dishes or soups that they find. It truly takes a village! I'm blessed to have such an amazing support system and a fervent group of prayer warriors.

Recently so many wonderful things have happened. I'm so close to reaching my fundraising goal. My line sisters made and sold bracelets for me at Howard University's homecoming to contribute to my fundraiser. They also created a logo for my cause. My best friends also started a hashtag on IG and FB, #turnupforTBell . Y'all, it's a movement! I'm a movement. Lol. I just hope that when people think of me and my movement they see that God is working through me. God is also reminding us that everyone's capacity to love, give, share, pray, praise, and experience happiness, are limitless. The past few months I naysayers would agree that shouldn't have been this happy or positive or open. But I've just been me. I've had down days, physically, spiritually, and emotionally, but I bounced back because of God's promise, my family, and the kindness and prayers of those around me.

Another really cool thing is that my friends-turned-family had a fundraiser in Mt. Pleasant where they sold chicken boxes to raise money. They actually ran out of food because so many people came out to support it. My mind is blown whenever I think about all these wonderful things. I'm just a regular young woman, trying to be the best I can be. Through everyone's kindness I see that I can do better and be a better person. Thank you to everyone. I really appreciate it. Let's keep praying for complete healing and spread the word about this movement. #teamTBellAlston #TurnupforTBell #choözelife

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

I am healed

November 14, 2013



I am healed! I am living in my affirmations. Chemo, as terrible as it is, is just a stepping stone to my healing. This week is coming along ok. Just tired, very tired and coughing. Otherwise I'm ok. Thanks for your prayers, healing thoughts and vibes, and affirmations.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Happy Thanksgiving

November 28, 2013



This thanksgiving I have so many things to be thankful for. The past few months I have been touched beyond belief by all the wonderful, thoughtful people who continue to help me win my battle. I'm touched by everyone who donated to my fundraiser and helped me raise over \$35,000. I know and understand that many people made sacrifices to help me and I am grateful.

I'm thankful to those that read my blog and make positive changes in their lives. Maybe this is one of my Divine purposes, to touch people in a way that inspires them to enjoy life, laugh often, and spread love. My life has been flipped upside down but I continue to live, love, and laugh. My chemo weeks are rough, but the 9-10 good days I have every cycle I'm living in my healing. All things considered, I'm living my best life :)

I'm thankful for all those praying for me. My linesister asked me to be specific and spell it out. Please pray to God to heal and restore my lungs completely and keep the cancer out of my body. Please continue to pray for my mother who was recently hospitalized.

I'm thankful for my wonderful children who don't understand and expect me to be the same me. I'm thankful for my daughter's helpful nature and my son's infectious laugh. I'm thankful for my husband's ability to be Mr. Mom on days when I'm just too weak to do anything at all. I'm thankful for all my family members who rearrange their lives to come and help my family during my chemo weeks. I'm thankful for my Mother and Father who support me and encourage me daily.

I could spend all day giving thanks and recounting my blessings. There are many people out there who are having a hard time this holiday season. Continue to be a blessing to those around you because you never know how people are feeling. Thank you again for everything!!! Let's keep praying and winning this fight! Happy Thanksgiving!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

6th round of Chemo

December 5, 2013



6th round chemo. Day 4 of 5.

Feeling nauseous, tired, and irritable. Chemo makes me kinda crazy. I see weird things, my hands don't work properly, AND I'm irritated by clutter, mess and loud noise, welcome to my house :)

Staying encouraged and prayerful. Leaning on The Lord extra hard!!! That gangsta lean, like, help a sista out!!!

I'm not worried, though. He keeps blessing me with prayer warriors sending me scriptures and reminding me to listen to CDs and meditate on his work.

Next week I have huge announcements but I want to unveil with a pic. Hopefully we are all feeling a lil giddy and joyful since it's the holidays. Can't wait to get our tree and decorate it next week while drinking hot cocoa and singing carols... And making sure EJ doesn't pull it down. Babies first Christmas!!!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Happy Holidays

December 18, 2013



I am done with chemo for 2013!!! This last round really knocked me back. Instead of the usual 4-5 day recovery it took about 8-9 days. Chemo has affected my brain, senses, skin, and hands among other things. Chemo brain is REAL. My processing and speaking ability are much slower right after treatment. My sense of smell of is

sharp, my skin is extremely dry, and my hands often shake making it difficult to write. And don't get me talking about the severe fatigue. Needless to say, I am way behind on my holiday and thank you cards. Please work with me, but know that I am extremely appreciative for everything that everyone has done for me or donated to me.

Since I'm feeling like myself, finally, I am definitely in the holiday spirit. I am so happy to be with my family and friends and loving all the beautiful Christmas cards coming in the mail. As the year winds down I am thankful in a way that I've never been before. I don't want anything for Christmas, an all-expense paid vacation to a tropical destination would be nice, but otherwise I am content. Obviously I'd love to be cancer-free and in remission, but that will come in due time. For now, I'm so happy to be alive and feeling good and happy.

Ed and I were recently talking about how cancer has changed us. Although I would love to not have ever had this diagnosis or this experience, it has brought me much closer to God and with many family members and friends. I have never experienced the excess of love, kindness, and thoughtfulness that I have in 2013. My hope is that this holiday you all will enjoy special moments with family and friends and experience a fraction of what I've been feeling. Put down your devices and enjoy laughing, talking, playing, and spending quality time. Let's focus on what we have, not what we don't have...like eyebrows, eyelashes, etc. LOL (I am slightly traumatized at the fact that I have no eyebrows or eyelashes).

Thank you for your continued thoughts, prayers, and positive energy. Happy Holidays Yall!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

It's 2014!!!

January 8, 2014



Happy New Year!!! I've been reflecting a lot on 2013. It was one of the best and worst years of my life. It started off just fine. I was in my last trimester, expecting a healthy baby boy at the end of March, and looking forward to a busy summer with Julia and EJ. On February 27 I received a call from my surgeon that turned my world upside down. The following day I was researching frantically about synovial sarcoma, trying to find something positive, an inch of hope, when my OBGYN called and said I was set up to deliver on Saturday... "Excuse me? Saturday, do you mean the day after tomorrow?" So I shifted gears and web pages to find exactly what I'd need for the first two weeks. I should have known, but my mind wasn't clear. The next morning I went to the store and told the first salesperson "I'm having my baby tomorrow and I have nothing at home besides the bedroom furniture. Please help me. I need EVERYTHING." Three hours later I walked out with everything I'd need to bring EJ home. The next day we delivered my darling son to a smooth r&b mix as snow poured from the sky. It was uneventful and beautiful. The next two days I doted on my baby and we received visitors and tried to be in the moment and not think of what was to come.

Two short weeks later I underwent major surgery to remove the tumor from my leg and fill in the area with my ab muscle, which would all be covered with a skin graft. Oddly enough I wasn't scared, just anxious to get back to my infant. Imagine undergoing surgery two weeks after giving birth and still trying to breastfeed. I was doing the MOST! I had, and still have, the best support system which made everything better.

Fast forward to July. On the 15th I was released by my plastic surgeon. My wound was healed and I didn't need to see him anymore. I was so happy. Two short days later I landed in the ER with a ruptured ovarian cyst. The

next week I went back to the doctor because the pain was still present. At that time a CT scan revealed the cancer had spread to my lungs. That day I felt lower than ever before. I wish that feeling that my husband and I felt that afternoon in the doctor's office on no one. Broken hearted, we proceeded. We enjoyed a wonderful family vacation in Toronto and came back and I started chemo.

I've had a lot of down days emotionally, and obviously physically because of the chemo effects... But I've had a ton more good and great days. The good days are the result of my family, friends, prayers, and of course blessings from God. Sometimes when I was feeling down I'd get a phone call, text message, card, or package that would cheer me up. I wish I could call out every single person for everything they have done and continue to do. God is working through so many people to touch me. I can't say thank you enough! I can't give God enough praise. Have you ever been in church and seen people jump up and get excited when the preacher talks about the goodness of God and how he will turn your situation around? I could be that person. I have a true testimony of how a negative situation brought me closer to God and really showed me how kind and generous people can be with their time, resources, and love.

On January 2nd, 2014 my doctor informed me that I'm responding well to the chemo and that my tumors are shrinking. That is nothing except our prayers and positive thinking and attitude. We still have a ways to go, but we are well on our way. Next week I have the first of my last two rounds of chemo. This break was much needed physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I'm ready to get this over with and move on with life. This year I don't have any big plans or resolutions besides kicking cancer's butt and sharing my story with anyone who will listen. I pray that my story can give someone hope. I also plan on giving back to my community and the many people who have been here for me and my family. And last, but definitely not least, spending QT with my family and friends and living MY best life. In that light, this weekend in Charleston my sister-in-law is planning a Gala in my honor. How fun will that be!!! If you are coming, bring your A game. Don't let the bald head fool you. I'm still fly :) And bring your dancing shoes because y'all know I love to slide and shuffle!

Let's continue praying and praising God for working this situation out. Thanks again for everything.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Weeds among the Wheat

February 3, 2014



Leave the weeds alone until harvest time. Then I'll tell my workers to gather the weeds and tie them up and burn them. But I'll order them to store the wheat in my barn.”

-Matthew 13:30

The past few weeks it's been so difficult for me to get my thoughts together to write a journal update. With today being the start of my last chemo for at least 8 weeks, I thought it imperative to let y'all know what's going on.

On January 11, there was a gala in Charleston for me. My sister-in-law Kendra planned and executed it without a glitch. It was an unforgettable night for me. The decorations and food were great, the silent auction items were really nice, the band was sooooo entertaining, and everyone who came was there to support me. There is no greater feeling in the world. We even had a comedian perform. I said a few comments and thank you's that were well received. All day I was trying to think of what to say and I finally jotted down a few notes but really I just spoke from my heart. I urged everyone to treat their body like the temple it is. I also encouraged everyone to spread love and joy because it is one of the reasons I've done so well throughout this difficult time.

The photographer took beautiful pics of many people who attended and the band had lots of crowd participation moments AND we had a soul train line. Honestly, everything was perfect. And even better every single thing, the food, utensils, band, auction items, decorations, photographer, man hours, etc were donated. It was truly a blessed event because everything came together like pieces to a beautiful puzzle. Thank you to everyone who

attended physically, attended in spirit, donated, or wished us blessings. I'd especially like to thank Kendra for thinking of this grand gala and making it happen. I was so happy. I didn't sit down or stop smiling the entire evening. I wish I could bottle up that feeling. It was simply wonderful.

In Church yesterday the message came from parables in the Bible. One of the stories was about a farmer who planted good seed in his fields for wheat. One night the enemy came and spread tare among the wheat. As the wheat grew, so did tare, littering his fruitful fields. The servants asked if they should weed the fields before it was time to harvest the wheat. The farmer responded to let them both grow up together and then they will separate and burn the tare. My run in with cancer has been the tare growing among my fruitful life. The cancer, although sickening and threatening my life, as weeds do to good fields, has allowed me to appreciate the good, great, and spectacular things in my life. Once a weed shows its ugly head, you are more aware and never the same, yet you have grown, matured, and are able to identify and bountifully enjoy the sweet, golden wheat, also known as your life. The Gala, prayers, and other thoughtful expressions make my life richer and really make me feel like a superstar, especially when the weeds sometimes make me feel so low. Thank you!

Today is the start of my last chemo before some scans and a break. My body has gone through so much in the past year that it needs time to rest and rebuild. I'm so excited. I'm ready to be normal and spend tons of QT with family and friends. It's been a long haul for us all. Thanks to everyone for supporting me. Every single gesture, thought, or prayer has been a blessing to us. Thank you for being part of my small army that is walking this path with me and filling my field with wondrous wheat.

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

It's our Anniversary

March 10, 2014



The past few weeks have been exhilarating. Filled with ups and downs and moments of clarity. These days I'm trying to allow my body to recover and rest from the past year of poking, prodding, and strong meds. It feels so good to have energy again. Imagine waking up and doing everything on your to-do list and not having to stop for a nap, to rest, or to go to bed at 7:30 with the kids. Amazing! The weather is warming up, the days are longer, and spring is right around the corner. This spring more than ever I'm looking forward to renewal.

Today is my 6-year wedding anniversary. From the moment Ed and I started dating seriously we talked of marriage and spending our lives together. Our plans were kicked into overdrive when we found out we were expecting our miracle baby girl. We weren't able to have our dream wedding. Actually, we never dreamed of what our wedding would be, but we did know we wanted to be surrounded by family and friends. Due to the rush to get married before I started working and started showing, we had a very small wedding in Jamaica with two guests, my sister and Kendrick. We got married at noon, had a reception where we danced to "is this love" (when in Jamaica it's only right to have a Bob Marley song as your first dance) and were playing pool volleyball by 2. It was lighthearted and free... Really, it was literally free. ("Have your honeymoon here and we'll throw in a wedding for free!" Perfect! We'll take it.) After Julia's birth we had a beautiful, dreamy reception in Charleston at a vineyard. Every time I hear Montel Jordan's "This is how we do it," I think of that beautiful day.

Ed and I have had our share of ups and downs like any marriage. We got married, moved to Charlotte, started new jobs, and had sweet baby Julia within the first 6 months. That's a ton of life changes! Neither of us knew what to expect but we stayed true to each other and made it through. Last year was rough for us for obvious

reasons but we made it through together. We are truly blessed to have each other and our cute little family. We are doing the best we can with what we've got and the hand we've been dealt. We are living our best life!

Our marriage has not only strengthened us, but our families as well. We are there for each other through thick and thin. It's a wonderful feeling. Life is so short and time is so precious. Spend time with those you love and those who love and support you. And of course, Live Your Best Life!

This blog is dedicated to my loving husband and wishing us 60 more years of marital bliss!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

It's been a long time, but I'm back

September 28, 2014



So much has happened since the last time I posted. I've tried to blog many times over the past months and

always found it very difficult. Since my Mother passed life has been rough. I miss Mom more than anything. During her last few months her health declined rapidly, but she was always her spunky, opinionated, loving self. Until just hours before she passed she was talking and giving Tiffany, Edmund and I a piece of her mind :) The legacy my mother left behind is strong and noble. She was so hardworking, giving, affectionate, and proud, but most of all she was a lady. Often when I think of things I do well or things I'm interested in I can relate it directly to my mother. I find myself wanting to expose my children to the same things and teach them all the things she taught me, but in my own free-spirited, zany way.

My last journal entry was in March, the best month of the year for me. March 2 is EJs birthday, March 10 is my anniversary, and March 19 is my birthday. Since then many things have occurred. Here's a quick recap:

In April I spent most of the month driving to and from Charleston to visit Mom. It was evident that her health was declining as her weight dropped drastically and she was immobile. Although heartbreaking, she stayed in good spirits most of the time because of Edmund, "her friend," who stayed by her side day in and day out. I've never seen such love and dedication in my life. I am sure that Edmund is the reason why Mom survived with her illness for so long. Edmund never gave up on Mom, he stood by her side, was her shoulder to lean and cry on, and a loving spirit who she could depend on for any and everything. This was a great relief and help to Tiffany and I, who live hours from Charleston and have families with young children. I remember vividly when my parents divorced. While living in Japan, Mom told me she had a new "friend." I was surprised yet very happy for her because everyone deserves a loving partner. That was in 2005! Nine years later their friendship was still going strong...

On May 4, 2014, my Mother, Gloria M. Bell entered eternal rest. Mom had a beautiful home going service with the most beautiful casket I've ever seen. She looked amazingly peaceful and a thousand (ok maybe only 300 or so) AKAs attended her wake due to Mom's dedication and service to our treasured sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority, Inc. All of her Links sisters also attended. I'm positive Mom was smiling in heaven.

Later in May my lung collapsed and landed me in the hospital for about 2 weeks. My two Aunts came to help me with my family and we had such a great time. Aunt Margaret is Granny's sister and boy do they have the same mannerisms. It was so comforting. Aunt Ester is married to Granny's brother and she can cook like nobody's business. It was so nice to spend time with them and for Julia and EJ to get to know their aunts. It took me about a month to recover and then we set out for a whirlwind summer. We spent some time in Litchfield/Myrtle Beach, at this cute lil hotel with the worst beds and smallest rooms EVER (I'll never get a groupon hotel again)! We spent a week at Folly Beach and had a ton of family and friends visit, which was amazing. The big finale to the summer was going to be an extended family trip to Hawaii. Unfortunately, three days before our vacay my other lung collapsed and left me in the hospital for 3 weeks. Total Bummer!!! The silver lining is that my Aunt Veta came down again to help us. Aunt Veta is my Dad's sister. We had a great time getting me ready for the 6th Annual LowCountry Jazz Festival, which was Labor Day Weekend. I had exactly one week to get my strength and stamina together so I could run a booth at the event with My sister in law, Kendra. It was a labor of love and I was beat after the 4 day event.

For the past 6 weeks I've been off of my chemo medications to allow my lungs to heal from the collapse. During that time, unfortunately the tumors in my lungs grew at an alarming rate. I was very nervous going into my CT scan last week because I had a feeling the results would be negative, especially after I developed a cough the day before the scan. So now I'm back on chemo pills. The silver lining is that it's pills vs IV meds. Also, since it was working before, we are praying that it will work again to stop the tumors from growing and possibly even shrink them.

I refuse to let this bad news discourage me or weaken my spirits. I have so many things to be thankful for and I know that this setback is just making my testimony even stronger! I am more than a conquerer! Please don't feel bad for me, instead continue to lift me up in prayer and send me good vibes and affirmations. I know God is doing something extremely special within me. I also now know that I'll be on chemo for the rest of my life. If chemo is what it takes for me to see my kids grow up, stand by my husband, and continue with the wonderful legacy that my beautiful Mother left, I'll do it. Obviously God knows I'm strong enough to handle this and look good while doing it...cause don't get it twisted, ya girl stays fly... No hair, gray hair, scars, and all, I'm still a dime ;) But seriously, please continue to lift us in prayer. Ed and I have our hands full with an energetic 18 month old and an inquisitive 6 year old. I'm still unable to work so pray for Ed's strength and prosperity within his business.

Again, thank you for all your thoughts, prayers, and kind words and gestures during the time when I lost my mother, during my hospital stays, or just any random day. I appreciate everything. The silver lining to all this is you, your love & your support. The blessings just keep coming. Thank you GOD for putting all these wonderful people in my life! I can't give HIM enough praise.

I promise to update more regularly. I've got so many things I want to share. Have a great Sunday and happy fall!

Sent from CaringBridge iPhone app

Comments

I've been meaning to read this post for weeks and am glad I was finally able to do so! You are indeed a dime (and you know I'd know ;-)) and I am so blessed by your witness. This was such a beautiful entry...thanks for sharing yourself with all of us! I love you sis and will continue to keep you and the fam in prayer! And hopefully soon we can get our boys together for a playdate...we might need to make a special trip down to NC to make it happen!! Lots of love!

—Tara, October 9, 2014

You are a jewel! And Yes, you looked great at the jazz festival! Just continue to stay strong.

—Priscilla Robinson, September 29, 2014

Prayers going up!!

—Hannah Mountain, September 29, 2014

I don't remember if I sent this to you or not but it doesn't hurt to send it again. You are surely in my prayers. There is nothing too hard for the God we serve. I love You

Healing Prayer

Dear Lord of Mercy and Father of Comfort, I come to you in prayer for my entire family maternal paternal and those to come. Lord I pray for my extended family and friends as well. Lord, I Pray For the Total Healing of them all because the physical is not the only part that needs healing. The mind and spirit needs attention as well. Praying helps heal all areas of our life, mind, body, and spirit. Each part is as important as the other. If we only pray for parts of ourselves, we are not balanced. I pray believing Father God for Your supernatural favor over each and every one of them.

Lord they need You to heal them from their sufferings and unite their hearts in love. The harshness of words can cause sorrow and pain. The responsibilities of daily life can cause anxiety and distress. The crosses that each member of the family carries are heavy. They need Your Presence to be their guide, their patience, their courage, their wisdom and understanding. Lord, if they should wrong one another, let them come forward with humble hearts and when they have been wronged let them forgive unconditionally. I ask you to turn their weakness into strength, suffering into compassion, sorrow into joy, and pain into comfort for others.

May they all trust in your goodness and hope in your faithfulness, even in the middle of their suffering. Let them be filled with patience and joy in your presence as they wait for your healing touch. (Psalm 107:20) says that you send out Your Word and heal.

So please direct Your healing Word to them all.

In the name of Jesus, drive out all infirmity and sickness from their minds bodies and spirits. Please restore them all to full health, dear Father. Remove all fear and doubt from their hearts by the power of your Holy Spirit, and may you, Lord, be glorified through their lives. Be with them Lord and each and every one involved with them throughout any illnesses or hospital stay should it ever become necessary. Lord God, You be their psychiatrist, doctor, nesthesiologist, nurse, and the surgeon, should it ever become necessary. Father God, please remain always the keeper of their souls.

As you heal and renew your children Lord, I praise Your Holy Name and I thank You for all your devine favor in the name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Amen

—Georgianna (aka) Pat, September 28, 2014

God bless you Tonisha! You and your family are in prayers.

—Anita Bryant, September 28, 2014

DearHeart!! This is just, yet, another avenue of many in your journey on this side. You ARE a WARRIOR covered by the healing and restoration powers of our Divine Father! You are also, dear Tonisha, blanketed by so SO many of us (your "extended family") who love you to no end and who are fervently uplifting you, your amazing husband Ed, your Sweetie-pies Julia and EJ AND your other beautiful beloveds in warm thoughts and prayer. You KNOW your legacy...YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARILY MAAAVELOUS!!! :) <3 u

—Cheryl Newman-Whaley, September 28, 2014

Love You TBellAlston! #StayStrongandEncouraged #YouraLivingTestimony #GodisworkingthroughYou

—V. Blue, September 28, 2014

God has you and his wisdom is always there. Keep the positive thoughts. I truly admire your strength/

—Sharon Ford-Bell, September 28, 2014

God bless and comfort you in all that you have endured and continue to endure. You are an inspiration to many. Peace, blessings and respect.

—Allison Brooks Roper, September 28, 2014

You make me smile!

—Rhonisha, September 28, 2014