



Millie Saccomando

HOMETOWN: St. Charles, IL

FAVORITE QUOTE: "It could always be worse."

MILLIE'S STORY:

In Oct 2001 at the age of 53 I had a biopsy to remove a small cancerous tumor, no bigger than a pencil eraser. Lumpectomy, sentinel node biopsy and radiation followed. Events that happened years previous to my diagnosis hold great meaning for me. The year that my best friend and I turned 40, she passed away from breast cancer, leaving three boys behind under the age of 16. My girls were 17 and 15 and my son was only 20 months old. Needless to say, I had great difficulty trying to understand why God would take her from her boys while He sent me another child to raise. All I could do was pray that God would give me 20 more years to raise my son. When I was diagnosed, my son was 15 and just starting high school. I got down on my knees and prayed that God not take me yet. I prayed for a few more years to see him fully grown. I am now an 11 year survivor. My son is 26 years old and a wonderful young man. God answered my prayers and I can't ask for more than that. Every day of my life is a bonus that I am ever grateful for.

HOW DO YOU HOPE TO INSPIRE OTHERS WITH YOUR STORY?

I never said "Why me" when I was diagnosed. No one knows why some people live and some people die. I know too many people who have died young and tragically. I am so grateful to still be alive when I have lost so many. I tell people all the time that I consider myself to be in such a bonus!

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU HAVE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF BY HAVING BREAST CANCER?

I have faced a lot of challenges in my life and come out OK. Coming face to face with your own mortality is the biggest. So many things in life that you thought were important really aren't. As my best friend said when she was battling to stay alive. "You have to play the cards you are dealt."

HOW HAS BREAST CANCER BEEN A BLESSING IN YOUR LIFE?

Breast cancer scares the life out of you but it sure opens your eyes. You find a new meaning of what is important and what isn't. Even 11 years later, if I find myself getting upset over something I ask myself, "If your cancer were to come back tomorrow, how important would this be?" Definitely a game changer.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU WOULD GIVE SOMEONE NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH YOUR TYPE OF BREAST CANCER:

No matter what type of breast cancer or any cancer for that matter, you are going to be afraid for your life. How bad is it? Did they get it all? Will it come back in the future? That was a constant worry the first few years. The longer you are a survivor you start to relax a little. Deep down that is always there. You just need to keep going every day and deal with whatever comes along.

WHAT BREAST CANCER STRESS OR WORRY WAKES YOU UP AT 1 AM?

After 11 years that doesn't happen anymore. I also have some other health issues and at 64 anything can happen, but again, ever grateful to still be here.

MORE THOUGHTS FROM MILLIE:

"It could always be worse." If something bad happens I tell myself to deal with it and be grateful it isn't worse. When my daughters would complain that they thought their thighs were a little too big, I would tell them be grateful you have legs and they work. Also Tim McGraw had a song called "Live Like You Were Dying". I adopted that theory. I did not go skydiving or mountain climbing. My 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fu Man Chu was each day doing something I liked even if was just to look out the window and watch the birds fly by.