

# OCTOBER BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

## Surviving 'The Weekend The World Shut Down'

Kattie Hendrix battles breast cancer with courage and love of life

By EJ Vernon  
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY HOME

Kattie Hendrix studied the reflection in the mirror. Her blond hair lay scattered on the grass.

The side effects of her first chemotherapy treatment caused significant hair loss, so Kattie decided to take matters into her own hands and shave her head during a photo shoot. She called her hairdresser and good friend Brandi Harris to take the photos.

"When Kattie sent me a text with a photo of her holding a handful of hair saying, 'I think it's time,' I think that is when it became a reality for me," Harris said "There is something real when you talk about shaving your head."

Kattie hoped to be an example of strength to her four daughters. Her daughters enjoyed doing their hair and playing with makeup, but Kattie wanted to show them that inner beauty matters more than outer beauty.

"I wanted to show them that your hair is not what makes you who you are," Kattie said.

Tears flooded Harris' eyes as she shot the photos.

"Kattie is the type of person who always freely gives advice," Harris said. "I was heartbroken because there was nothing I could do to fix it, nothing I could do to take her pain away."

"So much of photography is joy, but when you shoot something challenging, it makes the experience special. I knew it was going to be hard to capture what I thought was a dark day, but I also know I was documenting part of her journey."



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**Kattie was only 33 when she discovered a lump on her right breast.**

“It was just another Saturday in February,” Kattie said. “I was hanging out with family at the farm like we always do. When I came inside to take a shower, I was startled because the lump was not there the day before.”

She thought about her options and wanted to call her gynecologist but chose to postpone the phone call. A gifted specialist for third, fourth, fifth and sixth graders at Talladega County Schools, she was scheduled to travel with her sixth graders to Disney World.

“I couldn’t let my students down, so I called the following Monday,” she said.

**Doctors diagnosed Kattie with triple positive breast cancer on Friday, March 13.**

“My family and I always refer to that time as the weekend the world shut down, because not only was I diagnosed with cancer, that was also when COVID happened,” she said.

Zane Hendrix, Kattie’s husband, attempted to hide his fear when he heard the diagnosis.

“When I first found out, I was scared, but I didn’t want her to know because I needed to be strong for her,” he said. “Kattie is the love of my life. She is the love of my life. I don’t know what I would do without her. I am a natural planner, and at that moment, I was planning what I would ever do if I lost her.”

**Kattie began chemotherapy treatment on April 6.**

Doctors decided to start treating Kattie’s cancer with chemotherapy to shrink three tumors before removing them during surgery.



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"I felt better once treatment started because I trusted the doctor's plan, and thankfully it worked and I still have her," Zane said.

Like most cancer patients, Kattie experienced physical pain and feelings of defeat, but Kattie continued to live life.

"I always call her Super Woman," Harris said. "Even though Kattie was sick, she was there for me in ways I never could be for her. She taught me how to make cornbread. She was the one who was sick, and she was making videos and teaching me how to do something. I think she changes the lives of everybody around her."

**Kattie is now in remission.**

"There were so many days I wish I had a fast-forward button, but I kept telling myself this is temporary," she said. "I've tried so hard to be positive throughout this process. Everything happens for a reason."



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# Dr. Robert Hines offers helpful tips for Breast Cancer Awareness

Brookwood Health, Citizens Baptist encourage Talladega residents to be advocates for their health

By Michelle Love  
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY HOME

With October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Talladega County residents are encouraged to be aware of need-to-know details of how to combat the life-affecting condition. Dr. Robert Hines of Brookwood Baptist Health Center has seen many individuals deal with various cases of breast cancer and says it is vital for patients to know their status when it comes to breast cancer.

"All women should conduct self-breast exams, and if they feel anything asymmetrical, they should raise what they found with their primary care physician or OBGYN when they go in to see them. Then they can recommend further imaging or workup that's appropriate for it," he says.

Maintaining those self-examinations and scheduling regular checkups and exams with their primary care doctor or OBGYN are key to women staying on top of their physical health, according to Hines, who also recommends that women begin scheduling routine mammograms beginning at the age of 40. Mammograms, he says, are important "because they pick up cancers that patients can't feel yet."

Beginning screening at the age of 40 "helps prevent the most morbidity and mortality throughout women's lives," the doctor says. "It's been extensively researched. What we're aiming for is to find early breast cancers that can be treated relatively conservatively, and that really improves mortality and improves morbidity to go along with breast cancer treatments. The earlier we find it, the better the women do and the less additional therapy they have to get."

Hines advises women to perform a self-breast exam once a month, and they should begin around the age of 20. Mammograms, he says, can be done once a year. Women should be on the lookout for anything unusual on their breast that may have been absent before.

"The main thing you're looking for is an asymmetrical lump that you didn't feel before. That is the main thing. Any skin changes or markings on the skin. Any dimpling or anything causing the skin to look more red but the main thing is symmetry or looking for any new abnormality that was not noticed previously."

## October is Breast Cancer Month



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Hines says thanks to imaging advances in medicine and technology, breast cancer does not have to be as daunting as it once was. "The main advances in imaging have helped us find early breast cancer, which is the goal, because the earlier we find the breast cancer, the less scary it is. In addition to that, there have been advances in surgical therapy and improvement in surgical mortality.

"With evidence based medicine and extensive research we've learned you can take a smaller portion of the breast in a process called a lumpectomy. It takes just one or two lymph nodes from the breast, as opposed to doing a full mastectomy, which causes more anxiety and morbidity for the patient. There have been advances in chemotherapy and radiation, as well as advances in treating hormonal therapy."

Another way for patients to advocate for their health is to discuss their family history with their primary care physician. Around the age of 30 is the best time for this. Having the discussion opens the door to evaluating a patient's lifetime risks of breast cancer, says Hines.

If a patient is determined by their life choices to be at a higher risk for breast cancer, there are steps they can take to keep the risks as minimal as possible, according to the doctor.

"A few things they can do are getting genetic testing to see if they have certain genes that may predispose them to breast cancer, and we do recommend additional screening for patients who are at higher risk for breast cancer. It's important to know if you're at a high risk, so those steps are very important."



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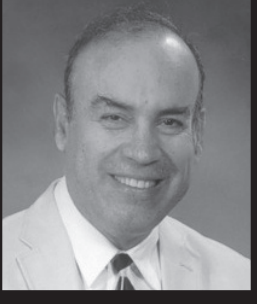
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# St. Vincent's St. Clair encourages yearly mammogram

Early prevention can be key to surviving breast cancer

By **TAYLOR MITCHELL**  
 TMITCHELL@DAILYHOME.COM

With October comes a yearly reminder about the importance of breast cancer awareness, according to Lisa Nichols, hospital administrator at St. Vincent's St. Clair in Pell City.

This month is annually designated as Breast Cancer Awareness Month by the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF). Each year, the organization uses the month of October to spread awareness of the disease. The foundation's web-

site ([www.nationalbreastcancer.org](http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org)) says that one in eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer at some point in their lives.

The foundation's website also explains that breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women, other than skin cancers.

"It is estimated that in 2020, approximately 30% of all new women cancer diagnoses will be breast cancer," according to the NBCF, adding that breast cancer has a 5-year survivability rate of 99 percent when detected early.

Nichols said that breast cancer awareness is

not only a reminder of the importance of good breast health but also in the importance for women to schedule yearly mammograms in order to keep up with their health. She wants local residents to remember that they don't have to travel to get this yearly check-up but can instead have it done at Pell City's local medical center.

"At St. Vincent's St. Clair, we offer advanced 3D mammography so that you don't have to travel far to receive the care you need. Call us today at 205-814-2136 to schedule your mammogram," Nichols said.



Lisa Nichols

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# 'This one is For the Girls'

## Coosa Valley Medical Center supports Breast Cancer Awareness Month

By MICHELLE LOVE  
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY HOME

Physicians and patients at Coosa Valley Medical Center in Sylacauga firmly believe in celebrating Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Last October, for example, patients and doctors alike pulled out their best pumpkin painting skills during the medical center's "For the Girls" event. The day involves painting pumpkins in various creative ways (such as decorating the seasonal squashes with the Breast Cancer Awareness ribbon and the likeness of Miss Piggy) to bring a splash of color to the hospital and remind people how breast cancer patients and survivors deserve recognition.

Terri Vaughan, director of hematology and oncology at CVMC, has announced that "For the Girls" will be held again in 2020, although the exact date has not yet been determined.

"Last October, the CVMC hematology and on-

colony staff held a pumpkin-decorating contest, allowing patients to be the judges. Pizes were given to patients, and our staff had a wonderful time celebrating them throughout the month," Vaughan said. "There were pig pumpkins, ghost pumpkins, pumpkins with tutus and pumpkins full of bling. Much fun was had, and a new tradition was born that promotes awareness for what the cherished pink ribbon stands for."

Making sure all patients feel included and appreciated is a top priority for the medical center's staff, and Vaughan said the event gives the patients a fun activity to highlight their creativity. The various designs also give insight into their immense spirit which continues to fight to overcome the obstacles each faces.

According to Vaughan, staying on top of your physical health is important, and she advises women to perform self-exams to make sure everything is normal.

"According to breastcancer.org, over 300,000

women will be diagnosed with breast cancer by the end of 2020," she said. "Early detection is critical in diagnosing and treatment. This is why we are so passionate in encouraging women to stay current with their mammograms as well as performing routine self-exams, even during these difficult and trying times."

Vaughan said since "For the Girls" was such a success last year, the staff has been abuzz with excitement about this year's festivities. While the staff of CVMC's Hematology and Oncology department honor and respect breast cancer patients and survivors all year round, Breast Cancer Awareness month gives everyone the ability to see the strength and vitality in each person afflicted with the disease.

"In the month of October, we honor our breast cancer patients who are currently battling, our survivors who have overcome and the memory of those who have lost the battle," she said. "This one is for the girls."




# BREAST CANCER

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# What is Breast Cancer?

## Research is important to understanding, lowering risk of disease

**By Vallean Jackson**  
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY HOME

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in women after skin cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute. It is often first recognized by a lump in the breast.

As is the case with all cancers, breast cancer is the result of cells beginning to grow abnormally. Exactly what causes breast cancer is still being researched.

Typically breast cancer is found in older women, but has been found within women younger than age of 40. It has even been identified in babies, toddlers, adolescents, young women and men, but such cases are uncommon. Those who have a family history of breast cancer are at a higher risk for it, but that does not mean that women who have such histories will definitely be affected by the disease. Life choices in favor of good health and exercise can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer, even with the increased risk due to family history.

When it comes to identifying symptoms of breast cancer, every individual is different. In some cases, there are no symptoms, which can come as a shock to someone who does not even have a family history of breast cancer. Studies indicate that many women diagnosed with breast cancer have no history of breast cancer in their family. Some symptoms of breast cancer may include skin changes, swelling, redness, increase in size or shape of the breast, nipple differentiation, nipple discharge, general pain and lumps on or inside the breast. Mammograms are used to detect breast cancer early enough to provide life-saving treatments.

With a doctor's evaluation of the breast tumor, it can be determined what form of breast cancer a patient has, in order to conduct the proper treatment. To determine the type of breast cancer also identifies whether the disease has spread beyond the breast or not. Breast cancer can be invasive or noninvasive breast cancer, triple negative or inflammatory. The most common type of breast cancer is ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS).

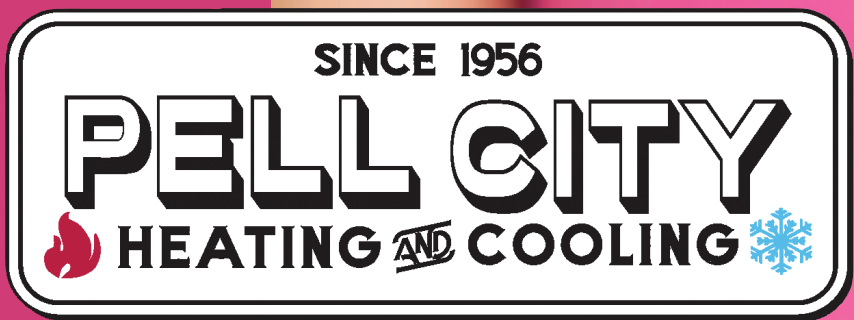
When patients learn that they have been diagnosed with breast cancer, many are often not concerned about the exact type or medical terminology, but about what they can do to get it treated. The plan of treatment is based on the progress and type of breast cancer, but options can include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and various medications.

A plan of action is based on recurrence possibilities. In some cases, even after treatment the disease recurs because treatments are just that -- treatments, not a cure. A cure has yet to be discovered, so it is advised

for patients to continue following up with their physicians for scheduled appointments, check ups and mammograms.

According to the American Cancer Society, there is no way to prevent breast cancer, but there are ways to lower the risk. Things that lower the risk are maintaining a healthy weight, being psychologically active, avoiding or limiting alcohol, early detection, breastfeeding, hormone therapy, genetic counseling and testing, preventative survey, and recommended yearly mammograms.

Sometimes even the healthiest person can be diagnosed with breast cancer because of the lack of knowledge of self observation or annual check ups. Do not avoid needed or suggested physician follow ups or appointments, because breast health is everyday, essential concern.



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