



Ida Faye Elder

Ida Faye Elder learned about her diagnosis only a week after retiring from Katy ISD and credits her Katy friends, family, and husband Don with supporting her



Kim Goodwin

A local dance instructor, Kim Goodwin only missed one day of teaching during her six months of chemo treatments



Ida Franklin

Even during chemo treatments, Ida Franklin made time to work from her laptop and was determined not to let her employees down



Andrea Watkins

After being diagnosed with breast cancer, Fox 26 news reporter Andrea Watkins shared her struggle with the disease on-air



Katy's Pink Ladies

After battling and overcoming breast cancer, these local women share their stories of hope and strength

Written by Cherri Northcutt
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According to the American Cancer Society, other than skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women. It accounts for nearly one in three cancer diagnoses in U.S. women, with 280,000 new cases of breast cancer expected to be diagnosed this year. What the statistics don't tell are the personal stories of what happens when breast cancer hits home. Katyites Ida Faye Elder, Andrea Watkins, Kim Goodwin, and Ida Franklin have all fought and overcome breast cancer. They share their inspirational tales of faith, courage, and finding inner strength in hope of encouraging others battling the disease.



*Ida Faye
Elder*
**Learning the
Diagnosis**

In December 2011, Ida Faye Elder, wife of Katy Mayor Don Elder, was looking forward to retirement from Katy ISD after 35 years with the district. “The very next

week, I was diagnosed with breast cancer,” she recalls. Prior to her routine mammogram at St. Luke’s Medical Clinic in Houston, she had no indication that anything was wrong. “I went every year faithfully,” shares Elder. “It’s just so important to go for regular mammograms.”

The mammogram revealed a density, so Elder went back the next week for an ultrasound and a biopsy. As she was driving Don home from knee surgery in rush-hour traffic and the pouring rain, her doctor called letting her know she had malignant breast cancer. “When I first found out, it was like an out-of-body experience,” she says, recalling the shock and disbelief she felt at the time. There was no history of breast cancer on either side of her family.

With a team of doctors from Texas Oncology Memorial City, including oncologist Dr. Frankie Holmes, Elder began her treatment. She had a lumpectomy to remove a mass of tumors and one lymph node. Three weeks later, she began radiation. “I did seven weeks of radiation, every day, five days a week,” Elder explains. “I was blessed that I didn’t have to take chemo.” At her June visit with her radiologist, Elder was declared cancer-free.

Coping with Cancer

After her diagnosis, Elder went through an emotional time. “There were nights of crying myself to sleep,” she remembers. “I thought, ‘Why me, why now? I’m supposed to be enjoying my retirement.’” Elder found courage through her strong faith in God. “I just kept praying for strength,

comfort, and answers,” she says. “Finally, something told me don’t worry about it, it will work out, and the good Lord will do what he’s got planned.”

Support from her family, friends, and the Katy community helped bolster her spirits, as well. “Everywhere I went, people said, ‘We’re praying for you,’” Elder says. Friends helped by driving her to treatments, bringing meals over after surgery, and giving gift cards for take-out dinners. Elder says that this experience has changed the way she looks at life. “Each day is a blessing,” she shares. “Things that seem big are not that big when you look at the whole picture.”

Raising Awareness and Support

Since she has overcome the disease, Elder has taken part in many fundraising events to support breast cancer research and awareness. She and Mayor Elder attended the Support the Girls Banquet last February, where she was an honoree. In April, they walked in Katy’s Relay for Life, a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society. She hopes sharing her story helps encourage others who are currently going through cancer treatment. “It helps to talk to someone who has experienced this,” she shares. “If I can help anyone get through this journey, I want to do that.”



*Andrea
Watkins*
**The Importance
of Annual
Mammograms**

KRIV FOX 26 reporter Andrea Watkins has enjoyed life in Katy with her husband Severo Palacio and two sons since 1993. Like

many women in their 40s who are juggling busy schedules, Watkins felt that skipping a year between mammograms was

okay. "Some people lead us to believe annual mammograms aren't all that necessary," Watkins says. "Well, let me tell you, they are."

After putting off her annual exam for a year, Watkins finally went for a mammogram and was called back for a follow-up appointment shortly afterward. "When the radiologist brought me to the back room to see the images, my heart sank," she recalls. "There were calcifications in clusters all over my left breast."

Eight Months of Treatment

Watkins was diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma in her left breast and sought treatment at MD Anderson. "It became a crazy ride of doctor visits, surgeries, pain, fatigue, and bad reactions to medicines that lasted eight solid months," Watkins shares. She opted to have a double mastectomy. Subsequent surgeries to remove lymph nodes revealed more cancerous tissues, so Watkins' doctors recommended chemotherapy. "That seemed more upsetting than the cancer itself," Watkins remembers.

"I just kept praying for **STRENGTH**, comfort, and answers. Finally, something told me don't worry about it, it will work out, and the **GOOD LORD** will do what he's got **PLANNED**."

- *Ida Faye Elder*

Watkins went through three months of weekly chemo treatments using the medicine Taxol, which made her hair fall out and caused numbness and blackening of her fingers. She worried about how to handle her hair loss at work, so KRIV FOX 26 News did a number of segments documenting Watkins' treatment. "It cleared the air in a way," Watkins says. "I didn't want the fact that I was wearing a wig to be this big secret people had to tiptoe around."

After a bad neurological reaction to chemo drugs landed her in the emergency room, she decided to end her chemo treatment two-thirds of the way through. "My doctor said he was confident that I was cancer-free," she explains. Watkins returned to work full-time in January and had her final reconstructive surgery this past May.

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An Emotional Toll

"We lived day to day in those months, with no routine," Watkins recalls. "Nothing felt normal." Family helped with support and encouragement, including her husband who was her constant anchor and her aunt, Mary Helen Baker, who had also battled breast cancer.

Watkins' friends and co-workers at KRIV Fox 26 rallied around to show their love and generosity, surprising her with full meals at her doorstep for weeks and weeks after her first surgery. She is still thinking of ways to say thanks. "I don't know if they'll ever know how important they are to me," she shares. She also appreciates the support and prayers of many kind viewers.

Never Giving Up

"When you get cancer, you can't throw in the towel," she says. "You have to do something about it." Watkins feels that by sharing her story, she can stress the importance of early detection and regular mammograms. For cancer patients, she also recommends a relatively new test called the Onkotype-DX. "It's a genetic analysis of your cancer cells to help determine the likelihood of your cancer spreading or returning," Watkins explains.



Kim Goodwin Finding Strength to Fight

Known as Ms. Kim by her many young students, Kim Goodwin has been teaching dance to Katy children for more than 20 years as co-owner of K.T. Dancing, Inc. Goodwin has always been vigilant about regular

mammograms, but in July 2009, she found a lump. "So next thing I know, I have breast cancer," she recalls.

The news came as a shock, because she had no family history of the disease and she had just lost one of her best friends to breast cancer about a year before. She drew strength from her father's victory over stage four esophageal cancer eight years ago. "It's a miracle that he's still with us," Goodwin shares. "Dad is my inspiration."

A Take-Charge Attitude

Goodwin sought treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center, where she had a lumpectomy and a follow-up surgery to remove 29 lymph nodes. "They had to cut through my nerve endings," Goodwin recalls. "I'm numb on part of my arm and back, and I'll never get the feeling back."

During her six months of chemo treatments, as Goodwin began losing her hair, she decided to take matters into her own hands. "I knew that shaving my head was the one thing I could control, so I marched down the hallway one day after chemo to the barber shop at MD Anderson," she explains. She expected to cry when she first saw her bald head, but was pleasantly surprised. "I put on my hat, walked out the door, and I felt stronger that day," she recalls.

On her first day of chemotherapy, Goodwin remembers that the other patients were all keeping to themselves. "I'm a talker, so I started a conversation," she says. "Pretty soon, the whole group was talking and the atmosphere in that room changed."

**"One thing CANCER
does is show you what's
IMPORTANT in your life."**

- Kim Goodwin



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Reaching out to Help Others

Goodwin made friends and exchanged phone numbers and emails with her chemo buddies. At that moment, she made a decision to volunteer at MD Anderson as soon as she was through with her battle. Now, she volunteers once a week in diagnostic imaging, working with patients who have just received a cancer diagnosis. "I'm meeting them on the very first day," says Goodwin. "My job is to say, 'I've been there and done that, and you can, too.'"

During the company's annual dance recitals, Goodwin sells Dancing Toward a Cure T-shirts to help raise money for breast cancer research. So far, sales have brought in more than \$4,500 over the last three years for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation and Dancing Toward a Cure, which helps families affected by breast cancer.

In addition to raising money with T-shirt sales and volunteering at MD Anderson Cancer Center, Goodwin was chosen as the Houston Astros 2012 Honorary Bat Girl, recognized for her commitment of going to bat in the fight against breast cancer.

Throughout her journey, Goodwin's husband Ron and their son Ryan offered their nonstop support, as did her friends. "One thing cancer does is show you what's important in your life," she shares.



Ida Franklin A Can-Do Spirit

As owner of Venus Construction, longtime Katy resident Ida Franklin works hard to run her business. She brought that same can-do spirit to her fight against breast cancer, when she discovered a lump in her breast that was almost three centimeters

wide. "If I beat myself up over any one thing, it's not finding it sooner," she says.

Like many women, Franklin had been putting off her well-woman exam and neglecting to do self-examinations at home. "We're told our whole lives to do a self-exam in the shower, but I kept thinking, 'I've got to hurry, I'm busy right now,'" she says. "I didn't want to spend that extra 15 seconds to look for a tumor."

She was diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2011 and immediately sought treatment at Methodist Hospital in Katy, where she met oncologist Dr. Shaguffa Naqvi. "I never felt like I was at death's door," she remembers. Dr. Naqvi was confident that Franklin would beat the cancer. "She

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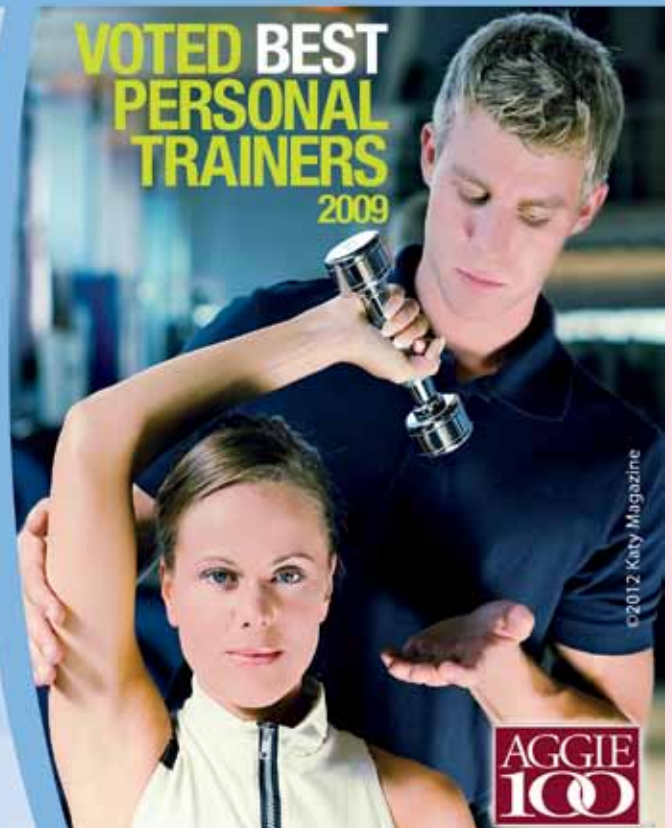
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never said, 'Maybe,' or, 'I think I can,' just, 'I can cure this,'" Franklin shares. "I had faith in her from the very beginning." After undergoing a lumpectomy, Franklin began six weeks of radiation, followed by nine months of chemotherapy. During her chemo treatments, Franklin would work on her laptop for the first few hours.

Friends, Family, and the Coffee Group

Through it all, Franklin had the support of friends, family, members of her church, and her coffee group, which meets every weekday. "The coffee group solves the problems of the world for an hour or so, and it's truly a diverse group," shares Franklin. The group includes a bicycle salesman, a massage therapist, photographer Sam Schultze, and Pastor Tim Douglas of Creekside Community Church, where Franklin attends worship. The coffee group offers its unique approach to being supportive. When Franklin lost her hair, Schultze shaved his head, as well.

One Saturday afternoon, as Franklin was mowing her yard, she discovered her hair was falling out. She immediately called her coffee group. "I said, 'Hair falling out, it's time,' and they all showed up at the hairdresser's." Her friends snapped photos with their cell phones to post on the internet while Franklin was getting her head shaved. "They just dropped what they were doing and came," she recalls.

Staying Positive

"People could not believe I wasn't freaking out over this," Franklin says of her battle with breast cancer. She worked hard to stay positive for her father, sisters, partner Alicia Widner, and the Venus Construction team. She also received a lot of encouragement and support from the people at Creekside Community Church and credits her faith with helping her stay strong. "God and I talk quite a bit," Franklin says.

Recently, she was an honoree at CHRISTUS St. Catherine Hospital's Celebrate Your Princess Breast Cancer Awareness Walk. She walked alongside her dog Maggie, who was dyed pink and given a tiara to wear. She was also an honoree at the Support the Girls Banquet at the Weston Lakes Country Club in Fulshear. "You can't just curl up and give up," says Franklin. "Your life has to keep going." KM

These are just a few of the many women struggling from breast cancer. Katy Magazine hopes to encourage them through this story.



CHERRI NORTHCUTT has enjoyed living in Katy with her family for 12 years.