

Katy mom and teacher
Christina Olachia founded
Christina's Breast Friends after
overcoming breast cancer

Christina and fellow volunteers
Heidi, Linda, Terri, son Joshua,
Brian, son Micah, and husband
Johnny



Christina Olachia and Brian Ring,
who dresses up like the Snuggie
guy for breast cancer fundraisers



The organization helps to provide
small comforts like meals, school
supplies, and emotional support
to those battling breast cancer



Christina and her sons
Micah and Joshua



**BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR
LAUNCHES GROUP TO
HELP OTHERS**

Christina's BREAST FRIENDS

Written by Cherri Northcutt | Photography by Barry Sigman

Hope

Love

Courage

Strength

Triumph

As Katy cancer survivor Christina Olachia looks forward to National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, she works to spread awareness and assistance to those battling the disease in the community. After conquering breast cancer, she founded the nonprofit group Christina's Breast Friends, with help from her friends and family. The grassroots organization helps breast cancer patients and their families with the everyday struggles they face. Whether it's financial assistance, meals, school supplies, or mentoring, Olachia is passionate about helping more and more families fighting cancer.

A LIFE-CHANGING DIAGNOSIS

Olachia's own battle with breast cancer began in December 2005 when she was only 32. She discovered a small lump in her left breast. After a biopsy determined she had cancer, Olachia underwent a mastectomy in early February 2006. In late spring, she began a six-month course of chemotherapy. As a result of the treatment, she lost her hair. "I didn't wear wigs; I'm not a girly-girl," Olachia says. "I wore bandanas, because I didn't want to disguise what cancer looked like."

Halfway through her chemo therapy, the Olachia family took a vacation to Walt Disney World. "We wanted to make happy memories, in case something were to happen to me," Olachia shares. Her sons Joshua and Micah were 7 and 9 years old at the time. At one point on the trip, the boys became overcome with emotion when they saw another young mother battling cancer, while still having fun. "They jumped up and down," remembers Olachia. "I thought it was one of the Disney characters, but they said, 'Look, Mommy. She has cancer, too.' I didn't know whether to laugh or cry." She realized at that moment just how alone her sons had felt. They didn't know any other families battling cancer.

As a mother of young sons, Olachia fought to have a normal life in the midst of her treatment. "When you get cancer, it's so hard because you're still in that caretaker mode," she says. "You push yourself further than you should, because you don't want to let the children down." She attended her sons' baseball games at Katy Pony Baseball Field, where her husband Johnny was coaching. Olachia recalls, "I would go to chemo in the morning. I would be sick as a dog and pull myself to the baseball field and run to the bathroom getting sick, then back to the stands and, 'Rah, rah, rah.' It's really kind of comical when you think about it." Throughout her journey, Olachia has tried to embrace everything with humor.

FINDING A WAY TO GIVE BACK

Olachia finished her chemo therapy and has been cancer-free for nearly five years. Every summer, she and her family go back to Walt Disney World to celebrate her life and her triumph over breast

cancer. "We've come so far," Olachia says. "It's not just me; it's my husband, my children, and my parents. Cancer has been a big chunk of the last five years of our lives."

The story does not end there. Olachia has won her own battle with breast cancer, but she wanted to do something to help other young mothers coping with breast cancer and all the hardships that come with it. "We struggled financially; we almost lost our house," says Olachia. With help from family and friends, her family was able to keep their home and pay their bills. "We were so blessed," she shares. "We needed to do that for other people." To help give back, she began the nonprofit volunteer organization Christina's Breast Friends.



Christina's Breast Friends plans on participating in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure

HELPING FAMILIES FACING CANCER

Currently, Christina's Breast Friends delivers meals to Katy resident Linda Austin and her family on the days of her chemotherapy. Austin and her family feel it's a comfort to know someone who's been through what they are going through with breast cancer. "Christina has been great with emotional support, school supplies for the kids, and other incidentals, because cancer is expensive," says Austin.

The organization's treasurer Brian Ring has helped raise funds and breast cancer awareness by turning himself into the "Snuggie guy," participating in the Warrior Dash and the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. "I had a brainstorm," says Ring. "Why not wear a pink Snuggie and run for breast cancer, with my warrior helmet painted pink, a bra on my head, and 'Save the Ta Tas' printed on the front?" Ring has represented Christina's Breast Friends as the Snuggie guy at a number of events, including Houston Astros baseball games. "I'm proud of what we are doing to heal and bring comfort to families in need and bring awareness to breast cancer," shares Ring.

Barbara Ziegler, a counselor at Rylander Elementary school, has known Olachia and her sons since 2006 and has referred several families in need to the nonprofit organization. "I call parents and tell them about [Christina's Breast Friends]," Ziegler says.

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"The one-on-one contact is phenomenal and powerful." Through Ziegler's referrals, Olachia's sons have connected with other children of breast cancer patients to mentor them and offer moral support.

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

This October, Christina's Breast Friends is putting together a team for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, set for Saturday, Oct. 1. There are also plans for a Christina's Breast Friends Walk in The Woodlands on Oct. 22. Looking to the future, Olachia has big dreams for more ways the organization can do its part to help. Her goals for the nonprofit include providing in-home haircuts after chemotherapy, Christmas or Hanukkah gifts for children of cancer patients, and even a Disney World vacation for a deserving family. "We need supporters and volunteers," says Olachia. "If you know of a family coping with breast cancer, get in touch with us." KM

CHERRI NORTHCUTT is a freelance writer, who has lived in Katy for 11 years with her husband and two daughters.



5 Ways to Help Christina's Breast Friends

- 1 Join the Christina's Breast Friends team for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.
- 2 Make a donation to the nonprofit organization.
- 3 Sponsor a family battling cancer, helping provide school clothes or supplies.
- 4 Volunteer to cook or deliver meals to cancer patients.
- 5 Refer local breast cancer patients to Christina's Breast Friends for assistance and encouragement.

Learn more about Christina's Breast Friends online at wix.com/christinasbreastfrie/christinas-breast-friends or read founder and breast cancer survivor Christina Olachia's blog at uniboobclub.blogspot.com