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Breast Cancer Survivor Organizes Charity Walk in Calhoun City

Precious Thompson tries to use her experiences to help others fight disease

OCTOBER 24, 2018 BY MICHELLE THOMPSON



Precious Thompson

OXFORD, Miss. – A breast cancer survivor who is determined to make a difference for north Mississippi women is organizing a charity walk this weekend in her hometown of Calhoun City to help patients get to doctor appointments and treatment centers.

Precious Thompson, administrative coordinator in the **Small Business Development Center** state office at the **University of Mississippi**, is hosting the Power of Pink Walk on Saturday (Oct. 27) at Calhoun City Park. Active in several other efforts to raise awareness about breast cancer and to help fund research and treatment efforts, Thompson said this project is more personal.

“When I was sick, (former Calhoun Cares charity operator) Tammy Tutor Tallant donated a \$25 gas card for every doctor’s appointment I had,” she said. “That helped me so much because all of my doctors were at least a 30-to-45-minute drive from my house.

“I want to help others because it meant so much to me when I was going through treatments.”

Since being declared cancer-free in December 2015, Thompson has maintained a busy schedule in her advocacy efforts.

She regularly works with Baptist Memorial Hospital-North Mississippi in Oxford to speak with women and spread the word about breast cancer awareness. This month, which is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, she has completed six speaking engagements and participated in the annual Cancer Awareness Research and Eradication Walk on the Ole Miss campus.

CARE Walk, sponsored by the **UM Panhellenic Council**, began 14 years ago and has become the council’s largest philanthropic event. With support and donations from many Oxford businesses and campus organizations, the event raises money for the North Mississippi Cancer Center.

Thompson is working on a bachelor’s degree in **social work** from the university. Besides working full time and attending college, she also serves on the Calhoun County School Board and the **UM Staff Council** and manages the Calhoun County Prancers, a competitive dance team of 35 girls.

Thompson was 43 years old in 2015 when she called her doctor about a painful mass in her right breast. The mother of four had a clean mammogram only a few weeks earlier and no history of breast cancer in her family, so she wasn’t worried.

The lump was soft and painful, instead of hard and painless like she’d heard cancerous lumps are. When it didn’t go away in a few weeks, she went for a checkup that led to a biopsy-lumpectomy. During the follow-up visit, the doctor informed her that she had a rare form of cancer, stage 2 invasive ductal

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Campus Briefs

Construction Set to Begin on Gertrude Ford Boulevard

OXFORD, Miss. – Closures of the southbound lane on Gertrude Ford Boulevard, near the University Avenue bridge, are expected during construction of a retaining wall on the University of Mississippi campus starting Monday (July 22). The construction will begin at 7 a.m. July 22 and is expected to continue through Aug. 31. During that time,

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Family Comes Full Circle with Ford Center Gift

OXFORD, Miss. – Family historian Kay Castellow McKnight is finding out more similarities between herself and cousin Gertrude Castellow Ford following a recent search through the family archives. After reconnecting with her father’s side of her family, McKnight is also expanding a legacy begun by her cousin at the University of Mississippi. “Gertrude was the

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carcinoma.

Thompson took the news in for a moment and then asked about her next steps, how was she going to get her health back. "What is the plan?" she wanted to know.

The doctor said he'd never seen anyone react like that so soon after being diagnosed with breast cancer. She didn't cry a single tear. But friends and family say this is typical of Thompson, never dwelling on a problem, focusing only on how to get to the solution.

Thompson had her right breast removed in December 2015 and began a yearlong regimen of chemotherapy and radiation. She lost all her hair and fingernails. Before losing her long hair, though, she cut and donated her ponytail to Locks of Love, a nonprofit that provides wigs for children who have lost their hair because of illness.

"It was hard to lose my hair," she said. "I loved my hair but I wanted to be able to donate it, so I went ahead and cut it short."

Not long after that, Thompson had her sister shave her head. Her sister cried, but Thompson didn't.

"I knew I was going to make it, that I was going to get better," she said. "I never for one minute let myself think anything but positive thoughts."

A positive attitude and lots of support and prayers from her family and church carried Thompson through 2016, a hard year of treatments. The chemo made her sick and extremely tired, and 33 straight days of radiation burned her skin.

She forced herself to eat and kept up appearances in front of her children, but it was a difficult time. Treatments were on Thursdays so she could recover over the weekends and be back at work on Monday, sometimes Tuesday.

"You can't let it stop you; you have to keep on being involved in life," she said. "I refused to stop working."

Thompson's tenacious spirit and positive attitude touched everyone she knew during this time.

"Precious amazed me with her strength and perseverance during her diagnosis, surgeries, treatment and recovery from breast cancer," said Judy Forester, interim director of the Small Business Development Center. "She never let it define her. Her smile and positive spirit are compelling to all who know her!"

It's been three years since Thompson learned of her diagnosis and had surgery. Recent scans indicate that she remains cancer-free.

When asked what she learned from having cancer, she said, "I believe this experience is all about me being able to help others. When I speak at events, sometimes I get emotional looking back on it all, but I still haven't cried.

"I know that God is using me. Eight people contacted me since I have been speaking and told me they went to get mammograms, found cancer and had it treated. They are all alive today."

The Power of Pink Walk is scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday (Oct. 27), with all proceeds going to help local residents get to the many medical appointments required for fighting cancer. The event has no entry fee, but participants are asked to order a pink T-shirt or make a donation.

To order a T-shirt or sign up for the event, email Thompson at ppthomps@olemiss.edu.



Breast cancer survivors Linda Brassell (front left), Tracy Hannaford and Precious Thompson participate in the annual CARE Walk with Ole Miss students in the Grove. Photo by Precious Thompson

Ole Miss In the News

TIME: UM Law Professor, Space Expert Featured in Moon's Historic Site Fight Article

'We Need That Boot Print.' Inside the Fight to Save the Moon's Historic Sites Before It's Too Late By Currie Engel/TIME Half a century after humankind first walked on the moon, our sole natural satellite is becoming a much busier place. NASA wants to make a return trip, as do private American space companies like

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