



Reading an obituary of a young woman who died from breast cancer prompted LaKaysha Broaders, a nurse at IU Health University Hospital, to do a self-exam. To her surprise, she found a lump in her right breast. Her doctor's office ordered a mammogram. Then, a biopsy followed. "At this point, I'm scared," Broaders says. "I'm a nurse. I know the faces." Two days later, on September 23, 2009, Broaders, a 34-year-old mother of three, received the phone call confirming cancer. "I just couldn't



believe it," she says. "Who, me? I'm fine. I work out. I just had a baby."

That same day she and her family met with breast surgeon Christina J. Kim, M.D., oncologist Sumeet Bhatia, M.D., and plastic surgeon Michael Stalneck, M.D. Although stunned, her faith helped get her through the day. "I said, 'Lord, I

know you are going to heal me, so whoever you send me to, I know it's going to be the right people.' I went to Community and they took me in like I was their child. They walked me through each step, each process."

Within two weeks she had a mastectomy at Community's Indiana Surgery Center North. Three lymph nodes showed positive, and Broaders was diagnosed with Stage 2 cancer. Dr. Bhatia told her he was going to treat her for a cure, but she had three things working against her: she was young, black and triple negative—a very invasive cancer. He designed an aggressive treatment plan for her that called for four initial chemotherapy treatments, a 12-week regimen of Taxol and 36 rounds of radiation. Broaders nicknamed her plan "the whopper." While rugged, in retrospect, she says it was the "perfect plan."

Broaders began her first chemotherapy treatment in November. She lost all her body hair to the treatments, with the exception of her eyebrows. Those, she later lost to Taxol. Although sick much of the time, she managed to attend her kids' basketball and soccer games and swim meets. "I didn't want them to be sad about what was going on at home," she says. During her chemotherapy treatments, her family took turns caring for her children, and her husband was "great." She credits them for helping her during that rough time. "I felt like once I got through those four treatments I could do anything," she says. In March 2010, after she finished her last chemo treatment, she was pronounced cancer-free.



**SURVIVOR: LaKaysha Broaders**

She had expected her journey to end with the radiation treatments, but learned that she was not a candidate for implants. In January 2011, she underwent TRAM reconstruction, in which tissue from her belly was used to reconstruct her breast. "I didn't want to have this surgery," she says. "It seemed like I always got the worst-case scenario. Dr. Stalnecker—I love that man. He was so patient with me."

Broaders, who had tried to protect her 10-year-old and 8-year-old, didn't realize how much her journey had impacted them until one child's grades dropped and the other became depressed. They didn't understand why, if she were cancer-free, she needed this last surgery, and they feared the worst.



In all, Broaders' breast cancer journey spanned an 18-month period. "Even though it was the worst thing that ever happened to me, it was probably one of the best things that ever happened to me," Broaders says. "It has given me so much clarity about life and how precious it is."

She's very thankful she read that obituary. "If I had waited another year or two, my story would have been entirely different."