

Living with

Christi Poske's annual mammogram in September 2010 was "perfectly clear," but one Saturday in January 2011 while showering, she discovered a lump. Things moved very quickly after that. On Monday she had a mammogram. On Tuesday she had a biopsy. On Thursday she found out she had breast cancer. "That just floored me," she says.

Poske had triple negative breast cancer, a very aggressive type. It had grown to 2 centimeters in those few months. "I was very lucky I found it," the stay-at-



home mother of two young daughters says. Her emotions ran the gamut from embarrassment, to wanting to run away, to being impatient to get started on treatment. Eventually her "get going" attitude won out and Poske set a goal of having everything done by her 40th birthday, October 30, 2011.



On Friday, Poske and her husband met with breast surgeon Nate Thepjatri, M.D., and Claudia Davis, her nurse navigator. A week later she received a chemotherapy plan for shrinking the tumor from oncologist Sumeet Bhatia, M.D. Poske opted to receive a treatment every other week instead of every three weeks so she would be done in March before spring break. Her life during her chemotherapy treatments, which left her "continuously tired," consisted of getting out of bed to get her daughters dressed and ready for school, then sleeping until they came home. She calls her husband, who handled pretty much everything else, her "Superman."

Tough as the original diagnosis was, Poske's lowest point came when she found out she was BRCA positive. "All I could focus on was, I'm giving my girls cancer," she says. "That was a huge thing for me and my husband to battle with."

After that diagnosis, Poske opted for a double mastectomy with immediate reconstruction, and in April her surgeries were performed at Indiana Surgery Center North. Two weeks later, she found out her cancer had responded completely to the chemotherapy. She was cancer-free. "We needed this outcome," she says. "This complete response. We got terrific results."

That's when Dr. Bhatia played Devil's advocate and threw another factor on the table—12 rounds of optional chemotherapy—saying this is the course he would advise his daughter to take. "That was the hardest decision,

because deep down I knew I didn't necessarily need it," says Poske, who ended up going for it. "We called it my 'insurance chemo' because it gave me that extra insurance." Luckily, her mother had moved in to help care for her daughters following her surgery.

On July 27, Poske finished her last chemotherapy treatment, and family and friends had a surprise party for her at the Cancer Center. When she arrived home, she and her daughters released 30 balloons, symbolically getting "all the cancer out of the house."



The clock continued to tick toward her 40th birthday, but Poske still had a date with gynecologist Keith Bean, M.D., for a hysterectomy, and with plastic surgeon Michael Stalneck, M.D. The hysterectomy, performed in August, showed no cancer present. "We fought ovarian cancer before it even got started," Poske says. "That was the biggest weight off my shoulders." The following month she had her final breast reconstruction. Finally, on October 26, with four days to spare, she aced her three-month checkup.

Poske has nothing but praise for her entire team at Community. "The nurse navigation system is amazing," she says. "Claudia became part of our family. She was there for me then, and she still is. And my doctors—whenever I started to drag my feet, they would remind me of my goal. They were on top of it. The whole process took 257 days. My goal was to be done with everything by my birthday, and

with my doctors' help and Claudia's help, I did it."