

# Meet the 2021 Houston



## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CHAIR

**STACEY PETERSON**



In September 2019, shortly after my 40th birthday, I went in for my routine mammogram. Most women start this at 40 years old, although I had already had a preventative screen at age 35. It was a normal and uneventful appointment, more of a “check the box” for me. Little did I know what was coming.

Shortly after my mammogram, I was called back in for a biopsy “just to take a look” at something that looked suspicious in my left axilla area as well as an adjacent lymph node. I remember the words “lymph node” giving me a gut feeling that I was about to embark on a life-changing journey. I was right.

Within a couple weeks, I was diagnosed with stage 2 Invasive Ductal Carcinoma (ER/PR-positive and HER2- negative). That is a fancy way of saying Breast Cancer. How could this be? After all, I had no signs or symptoms to speak of. I was young. I had 3 young children. I was an avid runner and lived a healthy lifestyle. I took good care of myself. My first reaction was shock and my mind immediately focused on how big of an inconvenience this was going to be for me and my family. I simply didn’t have time for this sort of thing. Looking back, I realize in that moment I was focused on all the wrong things.

# STACEY PETERSON



The next few weeks were a whirlwind that involved piecing together a team of doctors and surgeons that I would essentially entrust with my life. Before I knew it, I was getting my port placed and learning about everything that was coming in my journey of 16 rounds of chemo, 2 surgeries, and 33 rounds of radiation. I started chemo in October 2019.

The next 10 months were filled with many hours in the infusion room, a family head shaving party, many days of surgery recovery and radiation treatments, and a lot of time on the couch with my English Cream Golden, Pete. I finished chemo in March 2020 and completed my full treatment plan with my final surgery in August 2020. Throughout my journey, the support of my family including my mom (aka chemo buddy), amazing husband and 3 incredibly resilient kids, kept me trucking along every day. I am so lucky to have had such an awesome support system of family and friends. They are the reason I crushed cancer.

I am just coming up on 1 year since I completed my treatment journey, but the take-aways will last a lifetime. Looking back today, I still don't really understand why this happened to me and I never will. That is true of many challenges we are faced with in life. However, I made a strong commitment to myself at the very beginning to focus less on the "why", and more on trying to see the opportunity in truly "living through" this disease, as opposed to just "surviving" it. I approached my journey as a one would a calling, like I was meant to go through this, and it was meant to be a part of my story. Some days were more challenging than others, and I had my human moments, but leaning into it allowed me to grow, and allowed the experience to enrich my life, in many ways. Today, not only am I a cancer survivor, but along the way I discovered an inner peace and strength that I never knew was possible. My faith grew stronger. My family grew closer. My perspective forever changed. All for the better.

# STACEY PETERSON



I am honored to be a member of the Komen Leadership Council and to serve as the Executive Leadership Chair for the 2021 Houston Race for the Cure. I am passionate about finding a cure for this disease. I believe I am still here today because of the amazing research that has been done throughout the years. I hope all of you will join me this year in supporting these continued efforts! ...and for all of you amazing women out there, please GO GET YOUR MAMMOGRAM! It can save your life. It did mine.

