

Meet “Stacey the Warrior”



Stacey H. faithfully followed guidelines for breast exams and mammographies, knowing that both contribute to early breast cancer detection. This diligence paid off as her annual mammogram in July 2018 revealed the presence of breast cancer. In July 2018, Stacey received the devastating news that she had stage III breast cancer. Her surgeon’s prognosis was optimistic: if she underwent surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radiation treatments, she would likely become cancer-free.

Stacey’s surgery took place in October of that year. Following surgery, she successfully completed the chemotherapy and radiation treatment plan her oncologist set up.

Her cancer journey was far from over.

Stacey was in remission for five years before cancer was detected in other areas of her body. Stacey discovered a large, solid cyst that had formed at the back of her neck. She was diagnosed with Stage IV bone cancer.

The oncologist referred her to a dermatologist to determine if cancer had spread to her skin cells. The skin samples collected confirmed Stacey also had skin cancer.

Stacey continued to work at a senior living facility throughout her cancer challenges. She began to use her Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) approved leave of absence hours as needed for her medical appointments and procedures. (FMLA authorizes eligible employees with up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave per year. It also requires group health benefits to be maintained during the leave periods.)

In August 2024, Stacey's employer informed her that she would be placed on a leave of absence and would not be eligible for health insurance or other benefits once her remaining 24 hours of FMLA leave were used. Stacey thought, "Could this be happening? Wasn't this action in conflict with FMLA requirements?"

Stacey feared she was being discriminated against due to her medical condition. She contacted the social worker in her oncologist's office who recommended she reach out to CancerLINC for advice and assistance.

Stacey turned to CancerLINC for help fighting for the health insurance benefits she needed for treatment.

In Stacey's conversation with Michael Wigginton, Client Services Coordinator, he made her feel comfortable from the start. Michael assured her that CancerLINC could put her in contact with a pro-bono professional who could tackle her challenging employment situation.

CancerLINC reached out to Tim Schulte of the Shelley Cup Schulte law firm which specializes in employment law. Tim is a partner in the firm and provides services to CancerLINC patients pro bono. After discussing the case and a plan, Tim filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regarding the employer's actions.

Legal discussions between Tim, the EEOC, and Stacey's employer continued until December, when the company agreed to pay three months of Stacey's insurance premiums from January-March 2025 and cover their own attorney fees. Stacey was grateful for the outcome and said, "Tim was professional, friendly, and his communication with me was excellent."

Stacey needed all the help she could get because in addition to her on-going cancer treatment, in September 2024, Stacey had a cancer-related medical emergency requiring outpatient surgeries and oral chemotherapy.

CancerLINC connected Stacey with Chris Lynch, a CancerLINC pro bono attorney who specializes in Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) applications. Chris provided Stacey with legal advice regarding the process of accessing Medicare and SSDI.

As her employer's coverage of three-month insurance premiums would end on March 31, 2025, Stacey asked for CancerLINC's assistance to find a new insurance plan. In February 2025, CancerLINC helped Stacey navigate the individual health insurance marketplace to find a plan that fits her situation.

Stacey's spirit is strong and her gratitude is deep.

As Stacey's cancer journey continues, she finds strength in her belief in God and the support she receives from her guardian angels - - her loved ones that have passed away. She also follows the advice of her oncologist, who told her, "Keeping a positive attitude will get you through this!"

Stacey advises other cancer patients to: "Never give up. Continue to fight no matter how hard it may be. Find a reason to continue to fight, whether it is for a loved one, a child, a grandchild, a friend, or a pet. Faith over fear." Stacey is proud to call herself a WARRIOR!

Stacey is truly grateful for the love and support she receives from CancerLINC and its team of pro-bono professionals. She encourages other cancer patients to reach out to the organization for help following their diagnosis.

Everyone has a LINC to cancer. CancerLINC ensures no one has to face cancer alone.

If you would like more information about how to become a pro bono volunteer with CancerLINC, please contact us at (804) 562-0371 or visit our website at www.cancerlinc.org.

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