

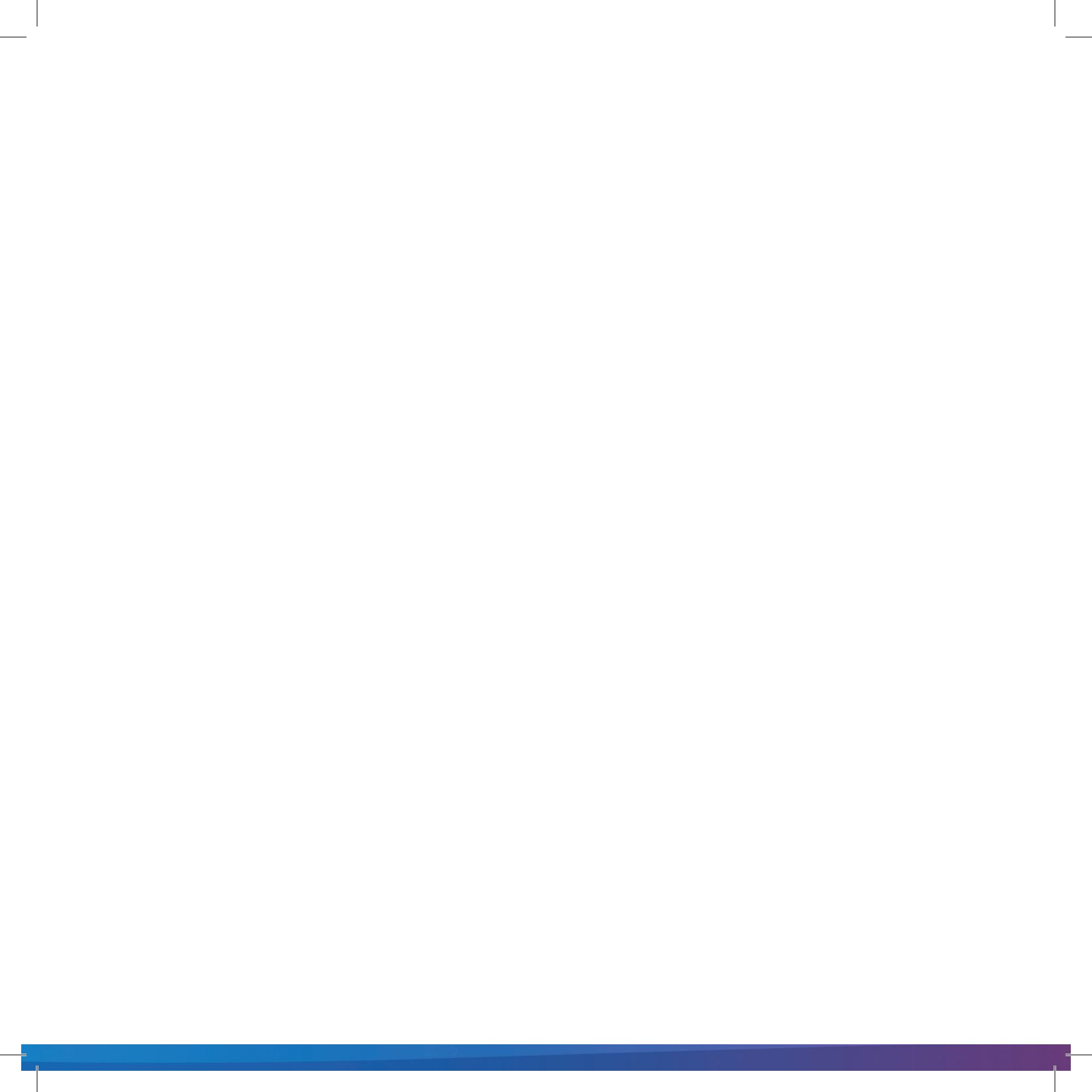
# WHAT CANCER MEANS TO ME



*Cancer Stories & Tributes from Under the Dome*

Benefiting the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
**2017 Issue**







**Special thanks to EMD Serono for their financial support to  
underwrite this publication.**

EMD Serono is deeply committed to changing the cancer landscape. EMD Serono believes that a combination of therapies targeting different tumor evasion mechanisms can change the way we treat a complex disease such as cancer in the future.

EMD Serono's diversified oncology and immuno-oncology pipeline includes multiple projects currently in development to optimize patient outcomes in challenging cancers that have significant unmet patient need. They are committed to delivering on the promise of immuno-oncology by combining creative thinking with strong research and clinical excellence, and, most importantly, by keeping patient needs at the heart of their efforts.

For more information, please visit [emdserono.com](http://emdserono.com).



In 2017, more than 116,000 Texans will hear the words “you have cancer.” From laws that fund cancer research, to those that enhance the prevention and treatment of cancer, the Texas Legislature has a direct impact on the lives of cancer patients, their families and communities.

Despite this work, nearly 40,000 Texans will die each year from cancer. This disease is a Texas-sized problem requiring a Texas-sized approach, which is why our state has emerged as a national leader in cancer research and prevention policy.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network proudly presents the fourth edition of “What Cancer Means to Me: Cancer Stories and Tributes from Under the Dome” and thanks the legislators who shared stories to illustrate why they work so hard to conquer cancer.

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit [acscan.org](http://acscan.org).

# Sen. Donna Campbell

Cancer is a frightening word for all of us. Whether it is a personal battle with cancer or a loved one who has been diagnosed, it is a disease that does not discriminate, and nearly everyone in the world knows someone who has been affected in some way.

It was July 2014 when my daughter, Amanda, called and told me that her husband, Jon, who was only 32 at the time, had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. As a doctor, I knew the road to recovery would be incredibly difficult. As a mother, it hurt beyond words that my daughter and her family would have to go through this battle.

However, I also knew that advances in medicine and cancer research made the odds of successful treatment better than any time in history. We prayed, and I told my daughter and son-in-law that I loved them

and would do everything I could to support them.

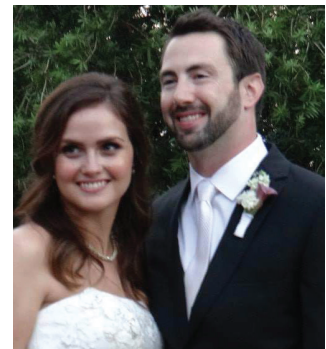
Jon's battle was long and tedious, but he never showed any signs of defeat. Throughout his treatment, Jon showed incredible faith, positivity, strength and resilience.

In fact, there were times where he was the one picking up the rest of us saying, "I'm doing great, and I'll be okay. Cancer will not win. I will beat this."

Sure enough, after 10 months of chemotherapy and radiation, Jon's strength won and his prayers paid off: His cancer went into remission. Two years later, Jon's not merely a survivor — he's an inspiration to all of us.



Sen. Donna Campbell



Amanda and Jon Braley on their wedding day

# Rep. Giovanni Capriglione

## In honor of Rob Rutherford.

Glioblastoma brain cancer is one of the most deadly forms of cancer, and three people out of 100,000 will be diagnosed this year.

Constituents and friends of mine have been dealing with this form of brain cancer over the last few years. Teresa Rutherford, of Colleyville, is a 30-plus year volunteer with the American Cancer Society. Her husband, Rob, had stage 4 glioblastoma in the summer of 2014.

Rob underwent a successful surgery at UT Southwestern in Dallas, six weeks of radiation and one year of chemotherapy. Shortly after his surgery, Rob started paying close attention to his diet because of acknowledged links between nutrition and cancer.

In 2016, the American Cancer Society said they had a Texas research grant that needed funds to get started. They asked Rob if they could use his name to help raise funds for the grant for Dr. Yu with Baylor Hospital in Houston. Rob thought that it would be wonderful if his challenge with cancer could be used to help save lives. He was honored that many family and friends helped to fund this \$160,000+ grant, which is now underway with high hopes.

In April 2016, Rob and his team participated in the MD Anderson Run for the Rose Relay for glioblastoma in Houston and also had a team in the North Tarrant County ACS Relay for Life in July.

After almost three years, his doctor and nurse call Rob their "miracle man." He continues to be blessed with a normal cancer-free life.



Rep. Giovanni Capriglione



Rob Rutherford



# Rep. Philip Cortez

Fearless leader. Warrior of change. Beloved mentor. This is how I remember the life of longtime activist and community organizer Choco Meza, who we lost to cancer in October 2016.

A graduate of St. Mary's University, Choco inspired positive change in the world. As the only Hispanic executive director of a Young Women's Christian Association in the United States in 1981, she served on numerous national committees and was sought by the national YWCA president to help to increase Hispanic membership nationwide. During her seven-year tenure, she increased their programs, day care slots, and after school program sites.

Her good works extended beyond the state of Texas. In 1992, former San Antonio Mayor Henry G. Cisneros tapped Choco to join him at the U.S.



Rep. Philip Cortez and Choco Meza

Department of Housing and Urban Development, where he served as HUD Secretary under President Bill Clinton. Choco served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations – a liaison to the White House and all federal government agencies regarding the administration's programs and initiatives.

Throughout her life, Choco participated in the political process as a voter, campaign manager and coordinator in local, state, and national campaigns. The legacy of Choco Meza lives on in the work of the many individuals she inspired, challenged and served during her 40 years in civil rights and social advocacy.

# Sen. Craig Estes

Jackie Bush is a fighter and an advocate for herself and others with cancer. She was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer in 2003. This had definitely not been on her agenda, but faced with this diagnosis, she donned her fighting gear and put fighting cancer on her task list. She thought she and her doctors had done everything that was needed with her surgery, mastectomy and chemotherapy. For five years, she was on a maintenance drug and remained clear of cancer.

In 2012, things changed. Jackie was re-diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer, and her fighting spirit returned. Thanks to research and advances in the development of cancer drugs, she was prescribed a new regimen of chemotherapy, including oral chemotherapy. This treatment is delivered in a pill available through her pharmacy.

She has been on this new regimen for four years and will remain on chemotherapy until a cure is found.

Part of Jackie's resolve through her cancer journey was to find a voice to fight back for herself and for others diagnosed with cancer and their caregivers. Her passion for this fight took her to her local Relay for Life event in Wichita Falls, first as a survivor participant and now as a stalwart volunteer. She increased her voice by becoming involved with ACS CAN to speak on behalf of herself and others. She continues to fight for a cure until there is one.



Sen. Craig Estes



Jackie Bush



# Sen. Sylvia Garcia

## **Cancer is a four-letter word in my family.**

We have witnessed first-hand what it does to someone and their family from diagnosis to treatment to ultimate death. We've seen it cross generational lines, gender lines and geographic lines.

We watched as a maternal aunt went through her battles with throat cancer. While we had fun teasing her about her little speaking box, we were tormented when she could speak no more and we lost her.

We watched as not one but two paternal aunts fought their battles with breast cancer. While we thought we understood it better, we learned the hard way that it can metastasize. We lost both aunts.

We watched our oldest sister fight her battle with breast cancer. While she was luckier and won the fight, she lost both breasts along the way, and always till her untimely death had to fear a return of it all again.

We also watched as our brother wrestled with prostate cancer. He's lucky — he has insurance and lives in an urban area with health care facilities, but it doesn't lessen the pain that he's suffered. He continues his check-ups and treatment, and it reminds us that cancer doesn't discriminate — it strikes both sexes.

We still grieve and remember too well my niece's fight against ovarian cancer. Diagnosed too late, her battle was short. Her young life was taken, but it reminded us all again that cancer lives among us all.



Sen. Sylvia Garcia's family

Cancer is a four-letter word in my family as I am sure it is in families across our state. For my aunts, their crisis was compounded with the lack of insurance and treatment centers in their rural areas. For my sister and niece, theirs was made harder by the distance from their homes to family. But for the support of family and others from afar, it could have been worse.

# Rep. Abel Herrero

**Cancer has touched the families of many in Texas, so I reached out to one of my constituents who has cancer and asked her to answer the difficult question: “What does cancer mean to you?”**

My name is Janie Pena, and I have cancer – stage IV angiosarcoma. I live in Banquete.

When I was asked this question, it really created this internal struggle for the right words that could describe what this awful disease has taken from me. I sat and began to make a list of things I may possibly never get to see. Thirteen line items later, I could think of nothing more. Everything on this list pretty much referred back to the first thing, which was time.

I then began a list of things I had done and all the beautiful people I had met since my diagnosis. Two pages into the list, I realized the answer to the question. Cancer means everything to me because it has given me the ability to see the spiritual strength within myself, my husband, and more importantly, my children. I have an amazing support group and prayer warriors who go to battle for me every day. I truly believe in the power of prayer; it's what keeps me going.

It took this question for me to realize that cancer has given so much more than it has taken. This list made me appreciate the pretty amazing things I have done and the amazing relationships I have made. I am eternally grateful to all of my family and friends for all they do.



Rep. Abel Herrero



Janie Pena

# Sen. Juan Hinojosa

## **Constituent Kaitlyn Jankovsky's journey and what cancer means to her, in her own words.**

My journey began when I was 13 years old. In August 2014, I was told I had cancer. Specifically, I had B-ALL (acute lymphocytic leukemia). I didn't know what this meant, as I was just like any other teenager. But I learned that when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. I started my treatment at Driscoll Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi immediately and was determined to ring that bell! My family, school, community and people from around the world rallied around me. I started a Facebook page called "Fighting Leukemia with Kaitlyn Jankovsky." I received messages from around the world, including Brazil, Germany and England. I even received a video from Lance Armstrong!



Kaitlyn Jankovsky with her family and Sen. Juan Hinojosa

I spent a lot of time in the hospital (almost six months to be exact), lost my hair twice, missed a year of school, had a feeding tube twice and had to have a hip replacement because of the treatment. In between all of this I made sure to go to every football game I could as I had to support my boys! But, on Nov. 10, 2016, I took my last chemo and on Nov. 15, 2016, I rang that bell!

To me cancer means never give up, prayer is powerful and never give up. My family and I have dedicated ourselves to raising awareness to the fact that children do get cancer. We talk to everyone about childhood cancers and the importance of funding for its research because there just isn't enough.

# Rep. Jason Isaac

## In memory of my mother.

Of all the things I remember about my mother, Sharon Ogletree, the most prominent is her positive attitude. No matter what challenges came her way, she always remained cheerful and optimistic.

Her diagnosis with ovarian cancer was no different. In 1995, while I was in college, she noticed slight pain in her abdomen, diagnosed as small cysts on her ovaries. The doctor recommended a hysterectomy. While in surgery, he discovered the pain was caused by more than harmless cysts — it was ovarian cancer.

She underwent debilitating chemotherapy treatments, but her positive attitude never changed. She continued working and living on her own as long as she could. She remained good-natured. She didn't want cancer to define her life.



Rep. Jason Isaac and his mother, Sharon Ogletree

My mother passed away in May 2002, while my oldest son was still on the way. Though losing her was one of the hardest things I've ever done, I'm truly thankful that my family and I enjoyed six wonderful years with her after her diagnosis. Without her vigilance and regular checkups, the cancer might have gone unnoticed and untreated much longer.

# Rep. Kyle Kacal

**As a legislator, we are blessed with countless opportunities to meet some pretty incredible people. Little did I know that a casual conversation that I had in my office one day would allow me the opportunity to meet Dorothy Paredes. Dorothy is a breast and ovarian cancer survivor. Scratch that, she's a breast and ovarian cancer thriver. After all, she beat a cancer that quickly claimed the life of my very own mother, Linda Kacal. The following is her personal account of what cancer means to her.**

Cancer itself is a hard, unwelcome word and "thing" to comprehend or accept. Cancer is harsh, painful and depressing. Cancer means rejection, guilt and remorse for things left undone in one's life.

Cancer stripped away the opportunity for me to fulfill some of my dreams, but what it also did was show me the light of hope and gave me strength and perseverance. It allowed me to see how much unyielding love and support there is among us all, where new friendships were forged and old friendships were reinforced, and the appreciation of just life itself.

Cancer gave me a voice that I now use to let others know that they are not alone in their fight. Cancer gave me the opportunity to work with community organizations, like the KK125 Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation, which strive to continue the forward movement of life without cancer.

So what does cancer mean to me?

It means loss, challenge, acceptance, hope, growth, strength, community and opportunity.



Dorothy Paredes and Rep. Kyle Kacal



# Rep. Ken King

My mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the spring of 2011 and passed away in the fall of 2013. I had never even heard of ovarian cancer, much less the early detection test known as the CA 125. After my mom's diagnosis, I learned that for well over a year, this blood test had been available. She was taken from us way too young; she was 64 years old.

Mom was a woman of tremendous faith; she fought her disease and accepted her fate with dignity and grace. My response was somewhat different. While my family was facing our challenges, State Rep. Kyle Kacal's family was going through the same thing. After the passing of our mothers, Kyle and I started a nonprofit – the KK125 Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation. Our primary goal is the advancement of early detection methods. We believe that if our mothers would have had the benefit of early detection, we would



Rep. Ken King and his mother, Paulette Brooks King

still have them in our lives. The foundation is a way we can honor the memory of our mothers, but even more importantly we hope our efforts will help save the lives of many women for years to come.

The brightest minds in the world are researching treatments and cures for all kinds of cancers every day but, the fact is, early detection is paramount to the successful treatment of disease.



# Sen. Jane Nelson

Texans always strive to be first and best. The fight against cancer is no different. Our collective ambition gave us the incentive to be first in creating a state agency to promote cancer research and prevention and bring the best and brightest researchers into our state. The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas has transformed the state into a recognized leader in the valiant fight against cancer.

In just a few short years, CPRIT's investments have enhanced the research capabilities and recognition of our state institutions, growing critical research infrastructure through the recruitment of 113 researchers and their laboratories. This number grows every year, and these bright researchers are finding new clues and answers to the causes of cancer and new ways to treat cancer.

CPRIT's prevention programs are serving Texans previously unserved or underserved – the Texans foremost in my mind when CPRIT came into existence. More than 3 million prevention services have been provided to these Texans in all 254 Texas counties.

I will continue to honor these Texans who bravely fight this disease, day in and day out, in the Texas Senate. I am proud to see Texas maintain her role as a leader in defeating cancer through CPRIT.



Sen. Jane Nelson

# Rep. Four Price

In 1994, then-38-year-old Susan Spurlock Rawlins was raising three children when she was diagnosed with malignant melanoma. Although frightening, with surgery and radiation, she fought and survived.

Six months later, she was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia. A bone marrow match took seven months, and he was found in the United Kingdom. Susan spent 68 days living in a “bubble,” in a city 250 miles from home. Her bone marrow transplant was arduous, requiring 10 rounds of total body radiation and 21 days of chemotherapy with many life-threatening side effects. Because of the treatments, she has had many surgeries, including a right knee replacement and partial femur replacement due to bone “death.” Her blood type even changed, and because her marrow donor was male, she now has the Y chromosome.

In 2000, Dr. Brian Druker developed Gleevec, an oral treatment for CML not requiring a bone marrow transplant. Although not available during Susan’s treatment, it has improved treatment for CML patients, and patients with skin cancer and certain tumors of the stomach and digestive tract.

In 2010, Susan was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a lumpectomy. To her horror, she was rediagnosed with breast cancer in 2014 and had to have a radical double mastectomy resulting in several bouts of infection, including MRSA and C-Diff, both attributable to her compromised immune system from her bone marrow transplant.

All along the way, Susan fought to beat her cancer and now fights so that others do not have to hear the words, “You have cancer.”



Rep. Four Price



Susan Spurlock Rawlins

# Rep. Senfronia Thompson

The excitement of opening day of the 85th Legislative session was a little dim for me with the absence of my dear friend, former State Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon. Rep. McClendon served her San Antonio district with great devotion and distinction from her first special election victory in 2006 until her resignation in January 2016.

Rep. McClendon did not resign for any reason other than her stage 4 lung cancer had spread to her brain and unfortunately wreaked enough havoc on her body that she was left no choice. But until then, I can tell you that Rep. McClendon showed up every day with a smile on her face, and she did her job the way her constituents expected her to do it.

While battling cancer, Rep. McClendon came to work on time, she ran a committee, she paid attention and she stayed day in and day out.



Rep. Senfronia Thompson and former Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon

When her legs couldn't carry her any longer, she rode a motorized scooter and was still able to outshine many of her colleagues. In fact, Texas Monthly named her one of the Top 10 Best Legislators for 2015.

Ernest Hemingway wrote that "courage is grace under pressure." Ruth Jones McClendon personifies that for me. As she continues her fight at home, Ruth's strength has left an indelible mark not only on me but on the Texas House of Representatives, where she served with grace and perseverance.

# Sen. Carlos Uresti

We all have family, friends or neighbors who have had their lives turned upside-down by cancer. As a state senator who represents more than 800,000 Texans, thousands of people in my district are diagnosed in any given year. Each victim of cancer or their family that I visit with leaves a lasting mark on my life. No matter our race, age, gender or political beliefs, there is universal agreement that in the fight against cancer, we are truly fighting for our lives.

The tragedy of cancer is compounded in the instances in which the disease was preventable – and above all, the single largest cause of preventable cancer is smoking. Tobacco use causes more than 80 percent of cases of lung cancer, which itself causes about 160,000 deaths per year and imposes great suffering on even

those who survive. Behind each of these 160,000 deaths is a human face and story, an individual with a family, friends, and a life that has been uprooted by cancer.

Unlike other cancers for which we must find costly and complicated cures, tobacco-linked lung cancer can be reduced with public policy actions. That's why I've been pushing for years to increase the smoking age to 21. This is a simple move that could greatly reduce the number of people who are put on the pathway to a lifetime smoking habit.

The reason why this change works is simple: The later in life someone tries that first cigarette, the less likely they are to become a lifetime user. This leads to less lung cancer, fewer preventable deaths, and longer lives. As a Marine, I have personally talked to many veterans



Sen. Carlos Uresti

who got hooked on cigarettes when they joined the military at age 18. They would prefer that young enlisted members do not make the same mistakes they did.

We have an enormous opportunity to fight cancer and other tobacco-related diseases head-on. Ultimately, this is about real Texans and their families. We owe it to our young people to implement policies that foster positive health outcomes.

# Rep. Jason Villalba

## Sweet Andie

As I braced for the cold rush of wind in my face as I left the hospital, I closed my eyes and thought of my sis. I had come to visit her on that brisk January afternoon knowing that she was very ill and her time was drawing close. She passed later that evening.

My sis and I were three years apart. Like a lot of siblings, we learned a lot from each other. She taught me how to read, how to play Parcheesi, how to coax an extra cookie from grandma and how to get along well with others – mostly! She had a heart as big as Texas and smile to match. We had our squabbles now and then, but in the end, we loved each other like only siblings can understand.

Andrea was diagnosed with lung cancer in February of 2011. She passed 10 months later after a valiant battle with a relentless and unforgiving disease. Andrea, or Andie, as I knew her, never smoked, often worked out, ate well and took care of her body. And yet, just like that, she contracted what most people considered a smoker's disease.

In the end, Andrea found great comfort in her faith. She did not go peacefully, but she ended up going to a peaceful place. I love her so much, and I miss her every day and I look forward to seeing her again someday when it's my time. Until that moment, I will rest comfortably in the solace of knowing that her birthday, May 24, shall forever be remembered as Lung Cancer Awareness Day in Texas – legislation I passed in my first term in the State House.



Andrea and Rep. Jason Villalba

God bless those who suffer and may the peace of the Lord be with you during your mighty struggle.



# Sen. Kirk Watson

I've been cancer-free since 1995, but my battle, like the ones my parents fought, left a deep and lasting impact on me.

It freed me to do some things I'd always found a reason not to do, such as run for public office. It also provided the clarity of a short-term focus on a long-term vision, which drives my public service.

Probably the greatest gift of my cancer was the simple opportunity to survive it. I survived because I had access to early, effective and frequent health care – and others should have the same opportunity.

That is one reason I spearheaded the effort to transform Austin's health care landscape through 10 goals in 10 years, including a new medical school, a teaching hospital and a stronger safety net for those who are uninsured. One goal was intensely



Sen. Kirk Watson welcoming the Dell Medical School's first class

personal: to make Austin a center for comprehensive cancer care.

In June 2016, the first class of Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin started their journey to become the next generation of doctors capable of providing world-class, patient-centered care for all patients regardless of ability to pay. At Dell Med's LIVESTRONG Cancer Institutes, they will explore and identify innovative models and methods of cancer care.

It is my hope that the work of these future physician leaders will ensure that more of our loved ones survive the beast, as I did, so that they may live on to love, dream and realize their own second chances.



# Rep. James White

Cancer either has or will touch the lives of every person in the world. It is truly a heartbreaking illness that inflicts our loved ones. Throughout my life and during my service to House District 19, I have met with many families who have been affected or themselves suffer the devastating effects of cancer. I hope that the courageous men and women who fight every day do not lose this fight and receive the strength they need to persevere from their families and through their faith.

I am glad to work with advocates and volunteers in my district who work to put on various community events and awareness projects. Southeast Texas is truly fortunate to have these advocates who go above and beyond the call of duty to assist those in need.



Rep. James White with ACS CAN volunteers

# Rep. John Zerwas

## **Constituent Anne Reardon's journey and what cancer means to her, in her own words.**

I had just celebrated my 43rd birthday. Life was good. I lived in a beautiful home with my husband and my two boys (Trey, 7, and Jack, 6). However, I got a call the day after on Mother's Day from my doctor indicating that my bloodwork was not good from two days before.

This began my cancer story. I was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML) with a 20 percent chance of survival if a donor was located for a bone marrow transplant. I would suffer a brain bleed from low platelets, spend 100-plus days inpatient at MD Anderson, receive more than 100 pints of blood as well as platelets, endure eight different chemotherapies and receive many other lifesaving infusions. Despite

being the middle of three girls, we would find a woman in Germany to be my donor. Graft Versus Host (GVH) disease would set in, causing many complications. I would have to have blood transfusions for 15 months. My blood type even had to convert to my donor's blood type.

I truly believe I am alive because of all of the research that has been done to learn more about winning the fight against cancer. Surviving leukemia is not something I take lightly. I will forever be indebted to all of those that did not survive, but researchers were able to study their cancers. Those brave individuals are not here to tell their stories. It is my honor to carry the torch so that their voices will be heard.



Rep. John Zerwas and Anne Reardon



