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Standing Up to Cancer

Every month, I travel 600 miles from my home near Chesapeake, VA, to Boston. It's a journey of hope that is made possible by some dedicated and compassionate researchers and Stand Up To Cancer, which focuses on quickly bringing new therapies to cancer patients.

For people like me with stage IV cancer, new treatment options are a fresh opportunity to try to beat back this merciless disease when the odds are especially grim. The chance to be part of a clinical trial is enough to keep you going and stay positive during an otherwise dark time.

In 2008 I discovered that my breast cancer, in remission for several years, had spread to my bones. I had just turned 50 and made a list of things I wanted to try that year: ride a helicopter, taste sake, attend a political rally. Going back into cancer treatment was not on the list.

One in every eight women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime. It's the second leading cause of cancer death among women, and it will claim the lives of approximately 40,000 American women this year alone. I was determined not to be one of them.

My oncologist in Virginia suggested a consult with a cancer specialist at Dana-Farber Institute in Boston. After meeting with him, I began traveling to Dana-Farber every six months for checkups. I went back on Tamoxifen, a drug I had taken for five years after my treatment for breast cancer in 2000. Things seemed to be going well until last year.

When the cancer cells migrated to my stomach lining in 2011, I joined a clinical trial developed by Stand Up To Cancer's [PI3K Dream Team](#) of elite researchers from leading institutions across the country. The trial is exploring the side effects of two oral medications thought to overcome the cancer's resistance to hormonal therapy and to block pathways that signal cancer to grow.

Dr. Eric Winer, my Boston doctor, coordinates my care with my oncologist in Virginia, Michael E. Lee. The night I learned that the cancer had invaded my stomach, I emailed Dr. Winer to let him know. His response at 10:30 p.m. provided me with a sense of reassurance and the knowledge that I'm in good hands and trust my care team.

I've been on the clinical trial since last fall and I'm doing well -- my cancer has stabilized. My story would be very different if it weren't for the researchers who decided to try a new approach and who had the backing of Stand Up To Cancer, which supports innovation in the name of accelerating the delivery of new treatment options. Being part of a clinical trial not only introduces me to the newest therapies, but it also allows me to "pay it forward." Perhaps the research that I am involved in today will help the survival of breast cancer patients in the future.

I continue to work in education, because I want my students to know that having stage IV breast cancer is only part of my identity. I'm still me and I'm living life to the fullest even as I'm engaged in this constant battle.

On September 7, I urge you to watch [Stand Up To Cancer's fundraising broadcast](#) and find out more about how SU2C is changing the field of cancer research and changing the future for people like me.

To support the work of Stand Up To Cancer, please visit www.standup2cancer.org

For more information on the PI3K Dream Team Targeting Women's Cancers, please visit <http://pi3k.org>.