

THRIVER Cheryl Jernigan

This breast cancer survivor fiercely advocates for cancer research



Cheryl Jernigan was seeking a better understanding of cancer treatments well before immunotherapy and 3D mammograms were common. Cheryl's journey began in 1996 when she first noticed a dimple on her breast. Known as a health nut among her friends and having no family history of cancer, initially, she didn't take it too seriously. She left her doctor a message and said, "I'm sure it's nothing. I feel fine." But it turned out it wasn't.

Instead of going to work, her loving husband Jeff, encouraged her to stay home to hear the biopsy results together. That was the beginning of their united front to battle cancer. Through her diagnosis, Cheryl learned how much research she had to do to make informed decisions about her treatment—lumpectomy or mastectomy? Tamoxifen or not?



Cheryl's positive attitude radiates in her advocacy work.

I am passionate to work with researchers and patient advocates to make cancer research and care better for patients... to improve how patients feel, function and survive! And to do it NOW!

The Journey to Advocacy

Once cancer free, Cheryl's patient advocacy work intensified, taking on new dimensions when Jeff was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2005. Cheryl was back encouraging oncologists discuss treatment options and questions they weren't accustomed to answering. Two short years after Jeff's cancer was in remission, it came back with a vengeance and was metastatic. Once again, Cheryl dove into research, seeking the best treatment options. Soon after his metastatic cancer was controlled and Jeff was back to enjoying golf, he felt something in the back of his throat. Jeff learned he had a rare tonsil cancer, yet another disease this couple forged through together. Jeff passed away in 2018, but their story of love and advocacy continues.

While appreciating the great strides made in cancer research, Cheryl understands first-hand the immense need for more effective treatments and care for patients. Today, Cheryl fiercely advocates for additional research, serving on several leading cancer research review boards and steering committees, including reviewing translational grant submissions for the V Foundation as an advocate reviewer. She travels across the country speaking to bring patients' experiences into research. ever mindful that Jeff's spirit is with her.



Cheryl and her beloved husband Jeff

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