



# Bright Light Foundation

## Courtney Loyd Pierce

*2011 BLF Recipient*



I was born and raised in Houma, La., married Gary Pierce Jr. and now have three children – La'Rin, Meagan and Tre'. We moved to The Woodlands in 1999 and later to Lake Conroe. I've been a realtor since 1994 and am currently employed by Keller Williams Realty. In late Nov. 2010, I began suffering from pain I had never experienced before. After numerous doctor and emergency room visits, I was still left without a diagnosis. My husband's internist then ran test for three weeks and presumed the issue was muscular-skeletal.

Three months later, he recommended more pain pills, spurning my replay of "No thank you." I was done with pills and wanted to know what was wrong. He ordered a bone scan that came back

suspicious. Then a pet scan – still suspicious. The radiologist reviewed a previous CAT-scan and noticed suspicious spots. That information along with blood tests compelled Dr. Tom Sloan to suspect Multiple Myeloma. An appointment and more tests at M.D. Anderson confirmed that diagnosis.

Multiple Myeloma is a cancer of the plasma cells in bone marrow. Plasma cells help your body fight infection by producing proteins called antibodies. In Multiple Myeloma, plasma cells grow out of control in the bone marrow and form tumors in the areas of solid bone. The growth of these bone tumors makes it harder for the bone marrow to make healthy blood cells and platelets.

The game plan was chemotherapy for three months, and a stem cell transplant at M.D. Anderson. They required that I live within 10 minutes of the hospital, so I rented a furnished apartment for 45 days near the Houston Medical Center. Those 45 days turned out to be four months. I successfully had one large dose of Metphalan (very potentant chemo) and two days later I got my clean Stem Cells back. After a large dose of a very potent chemotherapy drug called Metphalan and clean stem cells, a fever in the first week sent me back to the emergency room.

The next day, I was admitted to ICU and was treated for a lung infection. I had no immune system after the major chemotherapy treatment and was unable to fight the infection. I was eventually placed on a strong ventilator, VDR, for life support for three weeks. During that time the doctor told my family that I had a 10% chance of survival.

My family stayed and prayed constantly, never once believing that I wouldn't make it. Eventually, doctors remove the respirator and moved me to a regular room. My muscles had atrophied, so I couldn't move any part of my body. I had a Trach inserted, so I could not speak. My voice slowly returned after doctors inserted a button on my Trach tube.

I underwent physical therapist sessions twice a day. One day during the first week in rehab, the therapist told me, "All we are going to do today is walk." All I could do was laugh at her. She helped me stand up and gave me a walker. Wow, I walked about 10 feet. I was utterly amazed. Two weeks later I was released. My entire stay at MD Anderson spanned more than 80 days.

It's so good to be at home. As of late September 2011, I'm scheduled to undergo another bone and bone marrow biopsy to check for cancer cells. We pray they are gone, and with God's grace, they will be.

Thank you to the Bright Light Foundation.