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Don and Janie Barr in front of Janie’s “pinked out” jeep. The jeep was also done partly in honor of her mother, who passed away from breast cancer. L&T photo/Elly Grimm

By ELLY GRIMM

• Leader & Times

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of death in women, according to the American Cancer Society and is a formidable opponent for anyone who faces it. At this time, there are more than 2.8 million breast cancer survivors in the United States.

Liberal’s Janie Barr is one of them.

She received the diagnosis in June after a mammogram and then visited a cancer doctor in July. She then had surgery in August and followed up with nearly seven weeks of chemotherapy in Liberal and 16 weeks of radiation treatments in Dodge City starting in September, both of which she completed in early April.

“When we found out, we both just said ‘we’ll take it one day at a time, stay positive, don’t get upset,’ and we stayed positive through the whole thing,” Janie said. “I mean, some of the stuff’s been really bad...but I’m fighting.”



Janie said the treatments got rid of all of her cancer. However, the chemotherapy treatments were the most trying part of the battle for her, especially in the early phases.

“The first one was like ‘oh man this is a piece of cake, I can do this,’ the second one was a little worse, and with the third and fourth, I was out for like a week and a half,” she admitted.

Through everything however, Janie and her husband, Don, were able to stay positive and work together through the fight, in part thanks to some advice given to Janie by a co-worker whose wife had gone through the same fight.

“His wife had also gone through a little more than I had, so I knew everything that was going to happen,” Janie said of the co-worker. “He filled me in on all the stuff, and we had the same doctor and everything.”

“Yeah it wasn’t much of a surprise, we knew all the steps,” added Don.

After everything that Janie had to go through in her struggle with breast cancer, Don then decided to surprise her with a custom Jeep through the Chrysler Corner dealership in Liberal.

"I had a jeep that was a brand-new jeep that we had sent to Georgia, and had it was converted by Rocky Ridge Conversions," said Jay Musgrave, manager at the Chrysler Corner. "I had it sitting on the floor, and Don and Janie Barr came in and saw the jeep and really liked it. However, it was missing a few options that Janie wanted so I said 'that's no problem, I'll have another jeep built and sent to Rocky Ridge down in Georgia and they'll convert it the way you want it' and she said OK."

They ordered the jeep and while it was still down in Georgia, Don called Rocky Ridge because he had seen on the company's website how they had fixed up a pickup with pink lettering on it and with Janie being a cancer survivor, he thought that would be nice to surprise her and have Rocky Ridge do the pink lettering and also have the fenders on the jeep painted pink.

However, during the process of the work on the jeep, Janie accidentally found pictures of it on the company's Facebook page. However, that didn't surprise Don.

"It's hard to surprise her anyway with anything," he joked. "I think I surprised her maybe a couple times with balloons and flowers and other than that, she already knows so we were going to give it a shot in the dark, and it didn't work out. But it all worked out pretty good."

The job on the jeep took a little over two months and when it arrived, Musgrave said that Janie was more than excited. He was also pleased with the work.

"She didn't know that Don had planned on surprising her with it with all the changes, but she was happy regardless," Musgrave said. "In fact, I could see her when she got out of her vehicle when she came to pick it up, and I heard her squeal out there when she saw the jeep. So she's really happy."

“Jay said he could hear me inside because I was out there yelling ‘oh my gosh it’s so pretty I love it!’ He came out and said ‘I could hear you all the way inside’ but I was excited,” Janie added.

Since Janie completed treatment, she is now back to work part-time and says it will take some time before she’s able to return full time. But in the meanwhile, her and Don had some last advice to share to those going through the same thing.

“Just have a good support group...whether it’s family, friends or co-workers, whoever,” said Janie.

“Yeah you need a good support group through everything,” added Don. “And try not to let it get you down because it will get you down if you let it.”

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