



AFJROTC TX-953 Senior Leadership 2015-2016
"When you believe you can soar, you have become an integral part of the Golden Eagles... True Leadership, True Professionals, True Height!"
SMSgt. W. E. Hardy

ELYSE ROTHFELD

USHISTORY TEACHER: SOCIAL STUDIES DEPT CHAIR; MARATHON RUNNER; CANCER SURVIVOR

Instead of letting the dread overcome her, Rothfeld ran.

Quite literally.

Not from her terminal illness, but towards it.

Head on with a desperate starvation to annihilate it.

"When I first found my tumor, I was very scared," Elyse Rothfeld, social studies teacher, said, "I immediately saw a doctor and after a mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy it was determined I had cancer. I found out here at work. It was the scariest thing I had ever dealt with."



ROTHFELD WAS DIAGNOSED WITH TRIPLE NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER- which means the cancer did not express the genes for estrogen receptor, progesterone receptor, or Her2/neu, making it more difficult to treat since chemotherapy targets one of the three receptors, so triple-negative cancers often require combination therapies.

"I had a port-a-cath installed in my body to safely deliver chemo drugs and then on March 25, 2014, my 42 birthday, I underwent my first round of chemo," Rothfeld said. "Not the most exciting way to celebrate a birthday but I saw it as getting what I needed to have more and more birthdays. I was given what they call the "Red Devil". They gave me four rounds of that over three months. It was awful!"

SHE EXPLAINED THE SIDE EFFECTS WERE TERRIBLE. In addition to losing her hair, she caught hives, extreme nausea due to loss of white blood cells and vertigo, which is a sensation of spinning, or dizziness. But the treatments seemed almost never ending for her.

"I had 12 rounds of another chemo drug called Taxol," Rothfeld said. "I call that the insurance policy—to make sure I don't get cancer anywhere else. I had that every week."

Rothfeld finally received her breast-conserving surgery after 16 rounds of

chemo on September 10, 2015, taking what was left of her tumor. And after two months of a speedy recovery, she began her radiation treatment that lasted for four weeks, five days a week every morning at 6 a.m. It finally ended November 6, 2015.

With a nearly recovered body, Rothfeld began to fulfill one of her missions- racing against cancer.

RUNNING WAS NOT ALWAYS HER MOTIVE.

"I ran two marathons in my 30's," she said. "I didn't really like them so I quit running. I began running again a few months before my diagnosis," Rothfeld said. "I tried to run during treatment but never could, but I knew that once I was done with the treatments and surgery, I was going to have to run the Houston Marathon again. Beating cancer was my motivation."

Not only did running promote her with a sense of accomplishment, but it eased her mentality overall.

"Running helps me not go crazy!" Rothfeld exclaimed. "It helps me focus and breathe, in a way. I always mentally feel better after I run. I actually really like it!"

ROTHFELD HAD SUPPORT FROM HER FRIENDS, FAMILY AND CO-WORKERS.

"My family was very supportive and came from out of town to visit, but my

friends were my rock," Rothfeld said. "I am very lucky that my closest friends are also my colleagues. Most of my treatments were in the summer so I always had someone to take me. I was never at a chemo appointment alone. I couldn't have done it without Mrs. (Anne) Watson, Mrs. (Rebecca) Jortner, Ms. (Tishana) Trochesset, Mrs. (Angie) Patterson and Ms. (Sarah) Stowell, they were my anchors."

EVEN THOUGH ROTHFELD BEAT CANCER, she said she would never forget the trials and tribulations she endured.

"A potential terminal illness makes one think about what is important and what isn't, so I realized that I have a lot to give back," Rothfeld said. "I am lucky and I want the next 30-40 years of my life to be devoted to helping others, staying healthy and living a good life! I encourage anyone who has cancer to fight and never give up. You have to tell cancer to shove off and go away because it can't have you."

Rothfeld ran the Houston Chevron Marathon in January and she finished well.

"My goal was to finish the race in under five hours and I did that," Rothfeld said. "After the race, I was pretty emotional. I cried a bit, but they were good tears. I feel a million miles away from cancer and that makes me very happy."



STORY BY Bre'Anna Bivens

DONNA GOODMAN
 "Ms. Rothfeld is a tough teacher but she's effective and really funny."

