

## Personal story from a cervical cancer survivor



***Nora Bowers,  
wife, mother, teacher and cervical cancer survivor***

“At age 29, I was a devoted wife and stay-at-home mother of two young children. Like most women, I was focused on taking care of my family and was accustomed to putting my own needs last – including visiting a doctor. I was young; I felt great; I didn’t think there was any need to see a doctor. Plus, I was far too busy with the kids to make time for something that seemed unnecessary, until I had a bout with hay fever.

After losing the battle with my allergies, I broke down and decided to schedule an appointment, hoping for a prescription that would offer some relief. Aside from seeing my OB/GYN during my two pregnancies, it had been a while since my last doctor’s visit, so my doctor decided it was the perfect time to do a routine physical. Going through the usual questions, she asked me when my last Pap test had been. As I laughed nervously, and admitted that it had been five years, she did not see the humor, and I received a Pap test that day. I left the office relieved, knowing that if I did not hear anything in the next 7-10 days, all was well.

I went back to my life and normal routine until the ninth day after the test, when I received a call from my doctor. She wanted to see me immediately. My heart began beating faster. While driving to the office, I kept wondering why she would want to see me and how anything could be irregular when I felt healthy. I was young. I felt great. I had to be fine. I was wrong.

At her office, I was handed the pathology report. As I raced through words I did not understand, one word stood out: “carcinoma”. I knew what that meant. Tears streamed down my face as I thought: Am I going to die? Had I sacrificed

the chance to see my children grow up? What would my husband do after I was gone?

At the age of 29, I underwent a hysterectomy. Luckily for me, the surgery was a success, and the cancer had not spread.

Today, I am fortunate to be a devoted wife and busy mother of two teenagers. I am also a high school English teacher and activities director. I'm still busy, attempting to juggle it all, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

I sometimes think about how things could have been different and what I would have missed out on had my cancer remained undetected. For this reason, I owe a lot – my life, in fact – to the pathologist who diagnosed my cervical cancer so many years ago. Now, as a cervical cancer survivor, I have made it my goal to urge women to receive their regular Pap tests – because I want to prevent others from making the same life threatening mistake that I once made.”