



2019 HONOREE

Amber Wickham

As a 39-year-old mom and teacher, cancer was the furthest thing from Amber Wickham's mind. However, on August 15, 2018, after a series of events that led her to a colorectal doctor, Amber was told that she had stage 3 rectal cancer.

After a moment of shock, Amber pragmatically planned how she was going to fight and overcome this disease. As Amber put it, "I have two young children, and leaving them too early was not an option for me."

Amber's treatment plan started with 30 days of chemo and radiation. The goal of this round of treatment was to shrink the 8 cm tumor so that it could be removed during surgery. On December 11th, doctors performed a surgery to remove the tumor. Surgery was successful as the doctors were able to remove the mass, which had shrunk to 1 cm. Amber left that surgery with an ostomy bag that she would have for the next six months as her body healed.

Soon after surgery started another round of chemo. This second round is sometimes called "clean up chemo." Though the tumor was removed, it was possible that cancer cells remained in Amber's body, so the goal of this round was to destroy any remaining cancer cells. After this round of chemo, Amber underwent a second surgery to close her ileostomy so she would no longer need the ostomy bag. This surgery was completed on June 25, 2019.

Amber will have scans every several months to make sure the cancer does not return. Amber said, "At the beginning of my cancer journey, a nurse told me that cancer will not be the focus of my life's story; it is just a single chapter of it. As my journey with this disease comes to an end, I am excited to turn the page to the next chapter."