

waiting for the day.

words jessica jane summut | photography ben stone

KATRINA BEATS



It must be a strange sensation to feel you are living on a knife's edge; waiting in nervous anticipation for the axe to fall and wondering when the battle will commence. Katrina Beats, 31, a young business woman, wife and mother, knows all too well how this feels as she grew up knowing that one day it was very likely she would suffer from breast cancer. Having watched her mother and grandmother fight the illness, she was all too aware of the increased chance she too would have to endure this fate.

In October 2009, the wait was over. Katrina became aware of a lump in her right breast, and on seeing the specialist, the moment Katrina had been dreading became a reality. She received the news that she had breast cancer. Although somehow expecting it, it still came as a terrible shock.

The incredible story surrounding this gutsy lady is not so much about the fact that she got breast cancer, but more so about how she dealt with it. On discovering that her greatest fear was staring her in the eye, Katrina could have wallowed in her illness (quite understandably) and surrendered to a destiny she felt had already been chosen for her. But she didn't. She arose like a warrior and took on the future without any hesitation.

Katrina had the lump removed, and under further medical advice six days after the lumpectomy this extremely brave young woman gave her permission to have her right breast removed. It was lucky she did so. On further examination of the breast it was discovered that the cancer was spreading. Had the breast remained, it was likely that the cancer would have advanced to other parts of her body.

Katrina only allowed herself an astoundingly brief four weeks off to recover from these two major operations, before returning to her successful childcare centre and looking after her three-year-old little boy, Connor. Not content with just that, she also went on to conceive her second child. It seems that nothing, not even breast cancer, was going to hold Katrina back from living her life and even creating another.

As well as her family support, Katrina credits the Cindy Mackenzie Breast Cancer Foundation as a watchful angel that stood by her side throughout. She is so passionate about the Foundation she is in fact now an advocate for them, something else to add to her busy life. It truly seems that 'cannot' does not exist in Katrina's vocabulary. What a wonderful thing that is. ■

BRIEFCASE

This month we meet two brave sunshine coast women who have felt the effects of breast cancer firsthand, in our special Pinktober report. We find out that, through every tragedy, there is always hope.

inspiration personified.

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SANDRA BAILEY



When asked to think of whom one finds inspiring, many people picture family members, high profile celebrities, successful business entrepreneurs or leaders of the world, but a select few would list Sandra Bailey as their true inspiration, and maybe they should. Not famous and not rich, Sandra is an ordinary lady but with an extraordinary story of hope and strength known only to those close to her. She is a beaming example to us all of how resilient the human spirit can be.

Sandra, 49, a wife and mother of six, was unexpectedly diagnosed with breast cancer in September 2009 as a result of a routine mammogram, the first she had ever had. A 5mm lump was detected, and she and her family were devastated.

Sandra was given a lumpectomy five weeks later, by which time the tumour had grown to 3.5cm and had become worryingly aggressive. An urgent mastectomy of the breast followed, and a course of chemotherapy started thereafter, both of which left Sandra feeling extremely unwell as she battled for survival.

But this was not all. While Sandra's cancer was being diagnosed and treated, her husband of 25 years, Phillip, suffered a complete mental breakdown, another overwhelming blow for the family. Phillip was admitted

to hospital for four months, leaving Sandra to hold the family fort and fight her cancer alone. She had four children to look after at home, including one beautiful little boy with Down's Syndrome, and she was needed more than ever.

"It was an immensely difficult chapter in our lives," Sandra states. "My children were terrified of the future. I was afraid, for myself, for my husband and for my children, but I had to believe that everything was going to be okay. I had to have hope." It is this hope that gave Sandra the strength to continue when many would have crumbled under the strain.

Luckily, Sandra found support in the form of The Cindy Mackenzie Breast Cancer Foundation which became her lifeline. "The CMBCF was a guiding star for me in this time of darkness," she says. "They helped on a practical and emotional level and I am indebted to them."

Through much courage and determination, Sandra responded excellently to her rigorous treatment and is now free of cancer. Her husband is out of hospital and her children are looking ahead, studying hard and choosing universities. "The future is looking bright and it is a beautiful thing," Sandra says. "The heart can do anything if you believe." ■