

Andi Hasley Family Interview Part Two

Guest: Jamie Hasley

Lauren Hixenbaugh ([00:01](#)):

Welcome to Living Beyond Cancer. I'm Lauren Hixenbaugh, your host for today's episode. Living Beyond Cancer is a series of podcasts created for cancer patients, survivors, and their caregivers. This series is sponsored by the West Virginia Cancer Coalition Mountains of Hope and is produced by the WVU Cancer Institutes, cancer prevention, and control. I'm really excited for today's episode, as it is truly unique. Today, we're recording with Andi Hasley, breast cancer survivor, and manager of the West Virginia Cancer Coalition, and her family. So today we have with us Andi's husband Jamie, daughter Audrey, and son Grant. I'm really delighted to have you all here with us today as we talk about the journey that you all went through with your wife and mother. Listeners are intrigued to hear your thoughts, viewpoints, and your advice as we chat about this journey. Let's start off by reminding listeners of Andi's story from part one of this series.

Andi Hasley ([00:56](#)):

Hi everybody. This is Andi. So as a reminder, from the first podcast episode, I had my very first mammogram in June of 2020 because I had turned 40 and the mammogram showed pleomorphic calcifications, which required me to have a stereotactic biopsy. The biopsy revealed that I had stage zero ductal carcinoma in situ, which basically means that I had cancer in my milk duct. The treatment for that was a partial mastectomy. And then I had 21 radiation treatments. My cancer is estrogen receptor-positive, meaning that I am on estrogen suppression medication for quite some, at least five years, probably longer than that. Our family moved to Morgantown in June as part of this journey. And I'm sure Jamie will tell you a little bit more about that.

Lauren Hixenbaugh ([01:55](#)):

Thanks for sharing. Thanks for being with us here today, Jamie. I know that talking about this story is personal and it's not really easy, but we really appreciate you sharing with us. As we've talked about before we started recording, a lot of people don't want to ask for help. A lot of people and their families feel like the fixer and they don't always look for resources. So I'm hoping that this podcast can be a place for people to find information and kind of get some of their questions answered without having to go outside of their phone on their podcast, listening service, or whatever else they have going on. So Andi told us a little bit about her story and some of the struggles she went through. So could you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you met Andi?

Jamie Hasley ([02:41](#)):

Absolutely. Thanks for having me first of all, but I am Jamie Hasley. I am a middle school band director. I am originally from Follansbee, West Virginia, up in the Northern panhandle of the state. I moved to Morgantown when I went to college at WVU, which is where I met Andi, her and I were in WVU marching band together. I was in the drumline and she played clarinet. After we left Morgantown, we went to Keyser, West Virginia, where we got married and lived for a few years before we moved to Martinsburg. We spent several years in Martinsburg before we actually ended up moving to Morgantown here recently. And a lot of that had to do with her being diagnosed with breast cancer and some changes it brought into our lives.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (03:24):

Great. Thanks for sharing with us. Like I said, I know some of this is a little bit personal, but I think it'll be a good resource for folks. So kind of talk to us about how you found out about Andi's diagnosis.

Jamie Hasley (03:39):

So Andi's diagnosis, it was a pretty big shock to all of us. She had gone for her yearly mammogram. For the first time ever they found some abnormalities, but her family doctor was not concerned and just kind of started to go through the process because that's what we were supposed to do. They didn't think they would find anything else. It would just come back being negative and just being overly cautious. And so that was the whole story of every doctor we talked to was that they felt that there was nothing that they were going to find, but they needed to keep looking just to be sure. And lo and behold, one day I was outside actually helping my neighbor work in his garage when Andi came over to me with a look of terror on her face. And that was when she had gotten the results from her biopsy that she did in fact have breast cancer. And it was very early, it was stage zero, but still shocking nonetheless, because we didn't really think that that would ever happen.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (04:36):

Yeah, very scary. And so Andi didn't get called into the office. That was something that she found out on her own.

Jamie Hasley (04:43):

She found out over the phone, our family doctor called her. Our family doctor was a good friend of ours and so-called her over the phone. And I think our family doctor was equally as shocked as we were because she had no family history. She had no other signs or symptoms. It was pretty much out of the blue.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (05:02):

Yeah. So what was that like for you?

Jamie Hasley (05:05):

It was definitely a humbling experience. It was one of those, Andi is a force of nature. She is fearless. She is not afraid to do anything and pretty much nothing is going to stop her or stand in her way. And then all of a sudden it was a, oh maybe she's actually not immortal, maybe she actually is human.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (05:28):

And so one of the emotional parts of our last episode was talking about having to tell your kids, and I have a daughter as well. And so Andi and I kind of bonded over that this would be one of the hardest things was tell your kids. And so what was that experience like for you and how did that happen?

Jamie Hasley (05:49):

For me, it wasn't so bad. I was just kind of there because she wanted to tell them herself. She wanted to answer their questions herself. And so I was just kind of there as support to be with her and help her if needed. But in true Andi fashion, she did a great job. She was able to tell them what was happening. She was able to answer their questions. She got emotional I think, maybe once that I had to kind of step in, but for the most part, I was just there to support her and be with her.

Andi Hasley (06:20):

It's really funny that you say that because I don't even really remember what I said to the kids. I just remember them seeing me and Audrey, our oldest, especially just knowing instantly that something wasn't right. Because kind of like Jamie said, I'm just kind of a fine the next gear person. I just do what needs to be done. And I think that she could tell that something wasn't good. And the kids had known that I was having a follow up test. We didn't really go into details with it obviously, but when you have a stereotactic biopsy, there's some recovery involved in that. So I wasn't allowed to lift after that and I had to ice and I had to rest.

Andi Hasley (07:03):

So we had to tell them something because they're 15 and 11 so, and they were home. It was summer. So I think they knew something was wrong, but I don't remember at all when I said to them. I just remember it being really hard. I think that might be one of the parts of it that I just sort of did it and have kind of blocked it out. Because I hope I never have to tell them that again. That's for sure.

Jamie Hasley (07:28):

I think the hard part was that you were telling your daughter something that she is now going to have to deal with the rest of her life. No parent wants to tell their children that, Hey, I have this and now you might have it too in the future. It's something you're going to have to worry about. And so I think that was probably the hardest part of it.

Andi Hasley (07:46):

Yeah. And so I don't know if we said this in the first podcast, but I went ahead and had genetic testing done because of my age. And I had some family history outside of my mom that triggered enough red flags that insurance was able to cover most of it and then wait for the results of that test, and for those of you that don't know much about it is just testing for 80 genes that could show that you have a higher risk of developing certain kinds of cancer. And with breast cancer, they're specifically looking for the BRCA genes, the BRCA one and two. And because of the pandemic, the wait for the results of that was weeks and weeks. And that wait was really hard. And when we went to the doctor's appointment, when I knew we were going to find out the results, I think my blood pressure was like 160 over 100 when I came in, because I was so nervous that I was going to have to tell both of my kids that this is now something that I had given them. And it's funny, I would say that to Jamie and his response was so would you just rather have not had kids and not take that chance? And of course, the answer is no, but you also don't want to be the person that passed on something that, I mean, it could kill them. That's a horrible feeling. But luckily my genetic testing was all negative. Everything was fine. And it's just one of those things. But there was a lot involved in that with kids. We don't want to pass on any negative things to our kids, right? Like we want them to be beautiful, and intelligent, and not need glasses, and be athletic, and musically talented and all the things. And unfortunately, we don't necessarily pass on the things that we want to give our kids sometimes. And cancer surely isn't something I wanted to pass along, but I think that that was the underlying thought of all of it.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (09:55):

As we kind of go through, we'll hear a little bit more from the kids and their side of their parents telling them about this, which is I'm sure an interesting experience to hear from their side as well. And everybody's journey, I keep saying this, is a little bit different, but what was it Jamie, that helped you get through this the most?

Jamie Hasley (10:19):

The thing that probably helped me the most is my faith. I am a firm believer in that everything happens for a reason. I have always had a very strong belief and so life, while it is a journey, it's also somewhat of a destination. And so like here we are now in Morgantown, moving closer to family. And a lot of that has to do with Andi's diagnosis and had she never been diagnosed with breast cancer, I don't know we would be where we are now. And so sometimes you have to take the bad to get to the good. So my faith was a big part of that. Also, friends, family, just the amount of support we had, the amount of help that we had from folks bringing us dinners in the evenings to my neighbors cutting my grass for me, just anything and everything. There were so many times that I would say, oh, I have to do this. And I'd turned around and it had already been done. It's pretty awesome to have that kind of support.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (11:19):

Absolutely. And it's pretty similar to what Andi said too. Just different support from different people and kind of being able to tell them what you need when you need it is really tough, but it's obviously very helpful to get through so. One of the big things that Andi and I talked about together was how her diagnosis happening during COVID really affected things. Do you want to talk about how that impacted you?

Jamie Hasley (11:47):

COVID was awful. You're so used to being like the strong one and being there and being able to just sit and hold her hand or rub her hair, or just be beside her going through these hard things.

Andi Hasley (12:01):

Or to distract me with like,

Jamie Hasley (12:04):

Yeah. Or to tell a joke and be a distraction.

Andi Hasley (12:07):

Usually mistimed humor is his superpower. However, it's really helpful whenever you're stressed out about something to have humor. Humor is Jamie's best medicine.

Jamie Hasley (12:18):

And so now all of a sudden there you are like dropping her off at the hospital and just saying, okay, I'll pick you up when you're done and waving goodbye. And then you go, you sit in a car and just sit for an hour or two hours, six hours. Like you didn't really know, you just knew you didn't want to leave because you wanted to be there when she was done. So it was extremely difficult. I don't like to read. I have the ability to read, but I very rarely read for entertainment. And I found myself reading a lot as I was sitting in the cars, I found some good books. And so now I do read a little more because of that, but that was basically my entertainment, was sitting in the car reading to distract myself rather than just sitting and worrying and waiting.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (13:05):

And the other part of that, that we talked about was how that the COVID aspect of it kind of made it a little bit more of a mental gain. And how did you get through that?

Jamie Hasley (13:17):

Well, and that carried over. When we got back home, unfortunately, one of the first deaths that we knew about in Berkeley County was a teacher who had just recovered from breast cancer. And so for me, it was a little bit of hitting that panic button and thinking of, oh, this person just died who had just recovered from breast cancer, who wasn't a whole lot older than my wife

who is now going through breast cancer treatments. And so like the Hasley house went on lockdown. We did not leave. We did not do anything. And we were extremely cautious through that process. We were very careful of anytime we went out, we were always wearing our masks. We were always washing our hands. We pretty much had no contact with the outside world other than telephone calls and FaceTime or whatever, but anything else was just as little contact as we could possibly have for months.

Andi Hasley (14:13):

And one of the great things that you did was you got an outside area ready for me because this was in June. So, we had the summer and I really couldn't even visit with friends indoors. So he fixed up a little area in the back of our house that had kind of been a work in progress for the last couple years, but we found another gear and he made it like look really pretty and serene. And that's where everybody visited with us. So we just set it up so that we had a specific bathroom if people came over that they used and we put paper towels in that bathroom. And that was the only area of the house that people went in.

Andi Hasley (14:57):

And we spent, oh gosh, days and days and days on our back deck. And that seems like a really little thing. But when you're a person that really needs some support, the fact that a friend could come visit was a game-changer. And I just really appreciate that he has the ability to do this stuff, he's really handy, but that he was just like, okay, we'll just fix it up. And then that'll be where everybody visits. So I think those kinds of things, we don't really think about it until you really have to do it. And COVID really put us into gear with that kind thing. That's for sure.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (15:35):

Absolutely. Yeah. Having an outdoor space and being able to see everybody and especially the people that are supporting you. I mean, that's pretty cool. And I mean, pretty good idea on your part that you're able to come up with that and allow her to have that little bit of friends and family and contact. I mean, it was scary for all of us when we didn't know, but compounded with your diagnosis, I'm sure that was extra scary for all of you. One of the things that was difficult for her was the kind of overload of information during appointments. And she really wished that you'd have been able to be there so she could kind of relax a little bit more at those appointments and that a lot of our podcast folks have said, that overload of information during that time is really difficult and you just kind of space out or something. It's just too much to handle. So what was the days of Andi's appointments like for you?

Jamie Hasley (16:36):

For a lot of her appointments, what we started doing was rather than me just sitting in the dark more or less and waiting and wondering is that she would actually call me or FaceTime me. She'd put the phone on speaker so that I could hear what the doctors were telling her, the

nurses were telling her. I put a lot of notes in my phone or would actually record some of the conversations to kind of go back and review what they had said and what needed to be done.

Jamie Hasley (17:03):

And that was really helpful when we started doing that. It was really helpful so that I could actually hear what they were telling her rather than waiting for her interpretation when she would get back. And I know she would be frustrated a lot of times when she would come out from her appointments, because she would just say like, it was so much, I don't know that I got it all. And so that really not only helped me, but I think it helped her too to have an extra set of ears or someone else to kind of help remember what it is that needed to be done.

Andi Hasley (17:31):

Yeah. And that notes app that I shared in the first podcast, we actually function our whole life like that now. It's really kind of funny. We have a grocery list that is shared between the two of us and we have our kids doctors information's that shared... So the cancer journey ended up creating sort of a system between Jamie and I with keeping track of just life because there wasn't really a great way to do it. So I guess that's another good thing that came out of it.

Jamie Hasley (18:00):

Helped us organize.

Andi Hasley (18:02):

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. We know what we need from the grocery store now. So that's helpful. Yeah.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (18:10):

See you guys look at each other and talk about this, it's kind of a cool experience too. So I think I should note that because people can't see it and you guys are a cool team and it's very obvious as you're working through this podcast, so.

Andi Hasley (18:27):

Nice job.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (18:27):

So what advice would you give to other caregivers?

Jamie Hasley (18:32):

Yeah, it's hard because I know Andi, but I never had been through something like this with her. So it was kind of like learning her all over again. There was a lot of things that she would do, housework, chores, otherwise that sometimes we would do them for her. And it ended up

being more frustration than help. I didn't realize just how many times, like when she was running the vacuum, it wasn't because it needed vacuumed. It was because she was using it as an escape from something else. And so while there were a lot of times that she was appreciative that we were cleaning the house or trying to do things for her so that she didn't have to do them. Sometimes it ended up adding to her frustration because she didn't have that escape anymore. She didn't have that way to distract herself from her treatments or from whatever it was that she was experiencing that day. And that never goes away. Like especially now here we are a year and a half later from her diagnosis and it's like that skeleton's always in the closet, that monster's always going to be under the bed. And that's something that every time she goes to an appointment now she's wondering like, is this when it's going to come back out? Is this when it's going to get me? And again, like there's nothing I can do for that other than open the closet and look for her, or check under the bed or whatever. But I'm not the one that's doing that. It's actually a doctor who's doing that. And so it's never going to go away, unfortunately. It's always going to be something we're going to have to deal with.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (20:07):

And I think people are going to look at this and wonder how can I help my loved one as they're going through this experience? And I think the thing that we keep coming back to Andi said it in her podcast originally and I think we're saying it now in a different way, which is sometimes we just don't know what people need and we have to keep asking. And you guys had already been together a really long time before this diagnosis and had experienced things together. And here you are saying, I had to figure it out again. And again, I think that's just saying the same thing, that we have to keep asking questions and asking people what they need as they go through this. And that's really important part of the experience for everybody. So what resources were helpful to you and what questions do you think you wish you would've asked or things you wish you would've known beforehand?

Jamie Hasley (20:58):

Yeah. That's a tough one to answer because you just kind of learn on the fly and you don't know, but I guess just keep asking questions is the moral of the story. Even if you need to ask a different doctor or a different nurse. If you're not getting the answers or you can't remember, don't be afraid to send a message to that doctor or to that nurse and ask again, or if you're confused or unfortunately Dr. Google is not always the best source of information, but if you find something out there and you have a question about it don't be afraid to ask. And if your doctor can't answer it, ask a different doctor. There's nothing wrong with finding a second opinion or finding another resource. And if you find five different resources, but find one of them to be the most helpful, then you've done what you needed to do. But if you never look for that fifth resource, you'll never get the answer you need.

Andi Hasley (21:59):

I also think, so you went back to like relearning. So I think that what I'm going to say would be a great thing to add to that section.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (22:10):

Yeah.

Andi Hasley (22:13):

So when Jamie was just saying relearning me, I think that it would be important for couples, especially to know that you're going to relearn a lot of things about your life whenever you have your cancer, one of the two of you. Everything from what time the person normally goes to bed. I mean, that changed for me. And it continues to change because as I continue to have different reactions to medications, my energy level like ebbs and flows, and that's been a weird thing for us to navigate because it is different than what our life was. Things like, things the person can eat that maybe they can't eat. For me, I've had to pretty much not drink any alcohol through my treatment. And I've just maintained pretty much not drinking much because there's a lot of studies out there that say that alcohol can actually increase your chances of a recurrence. And I mean, your intimacy as a couple, it changes a lot because when you go through something with your body, as a woman that can really impact the way you think about yourself being desirable, feeling comfortable being intimate and the person has got to be patient with you. And the best thing that Jamie has done for me through all of this is he has just been there every day. And when I'm frustrated, or I have doubts, or I have things that I just, some days I'll be like, I just don't want to deal with this anymore. He'll just say, we've got this. Tomorrow is another day. And I feel really fortunate that I have somebody like him to help me get to the next day. I tell him all the time that when God was giving out soulmates, I'm awfully glad he gave me to Jamie. So I just think it's important to realize that just because things are going to be different because they are going to be really different after a cancer diagnosis, a lot of our things are not worse. A lot of our stuff is better. I mean, I think we look at each other differently than we did before. I think we appreciate each other differently than we did before and hang in there. And when you love someone, you love someone. And I feel really fortunate that he loves me.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (24:49):

That was so sweet. Was there any silver linings? So I feel like we definitely heard Andi silver lining. Is there any silver linings for you and your family?

Jamie Hasley (24:58):

I think the silver lining again goes back to my faith. We had lived in Martinsburg for a long time and we went through like, COVID started, her breast cancer diagnosis. My brother had some health problems. My dad passed away. There was so many negative things that happened like one after another. But then when we had basically a joking conversation with my brother about moving to Morgantown, it got real serious, real fast. And all of a sudden here we are, she's working for the cancer Institute. I have a teaching job here in Mon County and we're living right next door to my brother. There are so many good things that have come out of that negative

diagnosis that started it all. And so you just got to have faith. You just got to hang in there and believe.

Lauren Hixenbaugh ([25:51](#)):

Well, thank you, guys. I think that was wonderful and people will really enjoy listening to your commentary. I'm going to let Jamie and Andi have a break and we're going to interview Audrey and Grant and talk about it from their side. Thanks for sharing with us, Andi and Jamie. We were so glad to have you. We hope that you will join us for part three of the series and for some exciting news about Living Beyond Cancer after Andi's children's interview. To find out more information about Living Beyond Cancer, you can visit moh.wv.gov or WVUcancer.org. To join our Facebook support group, visit Facebook and search Living Beyond Cancer. Thank you for joining us.