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THEIR STORIES *Matter*

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month
BY CHERIKA JOHNSON

When we first gathered this group of incredible women for our Breast Cancer Awareness issue, the purpose was simple: **to honor the warriors, celebrate the survivors, and remind every woman reading these pages that her yearly screening matters.**

Looking back at this photo still moves me. Behind every smile is a story—a diagnosis, a difficult conversation, a treatment, a family that walked alongside her, a moment of fear and, ultimately, incredible strength.

This year, we felt called to do it again. Throughout this issue, you'll meet more women from our East Texas real estate community whose lives have been touched by breast cancer. They are agents, industry professionals, wives, mothers, friends, and survivors. While their journeys are different, each has graciously chosen to share her story in hopes that another woman may learn from it, find encouragement in it, or simply know she is not alone.

This issue is about more than survival. It is also about **awareness and action.**

Matter

Schedule the mammogram. Keep the appointment. Pay attention to your body. Encourage the women you love to do the same. Sometimes there are no obvious warning signs, which is exactly why routine screenings matter.

To every warrior who has trusted us with her story—past and present—thank you.

We honor you. We celebrate you. And most importantly, **we hear you.**



Cherika Johnson, Publisher
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5,400


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SALES
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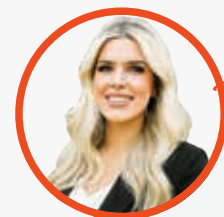
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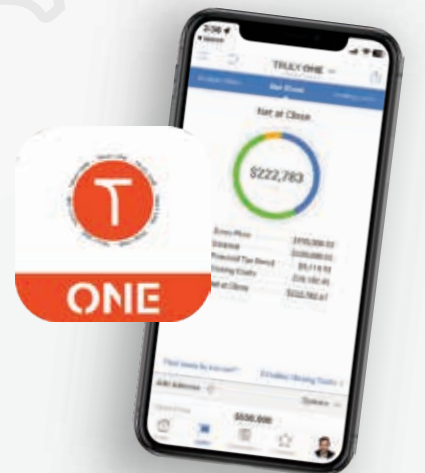
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Kristie VAN HUIS

MORE THAN A SURVIVOR

WRITTEN BY CHERIKA JOHNSON

For Kristie Van Huis, persistence isn't simply a quality that has helped her build a successful 26-year career in the mortgage industry. Life required her to learn it.

Kristie is a Stage 3C breast cancer survivor.

"Having breast cancer taught me to be persistent and never give up," she says. "At the same time, my kids kept me strong and taught me grace and patience."

Today, as a Senior Mortgage Lender with CrossCountry Mortgage, Kristie brings that same persistence to the families and real estate professionals she serves. But during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, there is another message she hopes her story can deliver—one that goes beyond the familiar reminder to schedule a mammogram. She wants women to know the importance of asking questions and understanding their options if a diagnosis ever comes.

A Message She Wishes She Had Known

Kristie's own diagnosis came quickly and brought decisions she wasn't prepared to make. She underwent a double mastectomy followed by reconstruction with expanders and implants.

At the time, she says she wasn't aware of other reconstructive approaches. Over the years, complications led to multiple additional surgeries, including problems with an expander and implants. Eventually, conversations with fellow breast cancer survivors, including REALTORS® in the Tyler area, introduced Kristie to another surgical option and a Houston physician who could help. Her most recent procedure lasted approximately 13 hours and required a 10-day stay in Houston. Looking back, Kristie wishes she had known earlier what questions she could have asked and what options she

could have researched. That is why she shares her experience now. "Getting a breast cancer diagnosis is shocking, and everything can happen so fast," she says. "I want women to know that if you do get breast cancer, you have options. Research those options, ask questions, and talk to other survivors." She is even willing to be one of those conversations. If sharing what she has learned can help another woman feel more informed when speaking with her medical team, Kristie considers that part of her purpose.

Putting the Person Before the Paper

That concern for people carries directly into Kristie's professional life. Her



mortgage career actually began with a combination of necessity, opportunity, and what she now considers a little bit of fate. A working mother with a banking background and a love for numbers, Kristie was looking for a career change when she visited a friend at Countrywide Mortgage. A manager stopped her and asked whether she had ever considered the mortgage industry. She took the leap and never looked back.

An unexpected sign suggested she had found exactly where she belonged: the phone number Kristie had carried since high school ended in 4663—the numbers that spell H-O-M-E on a telephone



keypad. "I truly feel this profession was my calling," she says. Twenty-six years later, her philosophy is simple: put the person before the paper.

Kristie believes mortgages should never become merely files, numbers, and interest rates. She focuses on educating clients, communicating proactively, and finding solutions when challenges arise. Creative problem-solving and helping families achieve homeownership remain among her favorite parts of the business. Her commitment has earned recognition, including GTAR Affiliate of the Year, President's Club honors with companies throughout her career, and service as a WCR Bras for a Cause Ambassador.

Success, to Kristie, is much more personal. It is setting goals, making little daily

progress, and eventually reaching big milestones. It is the relationships built along the way and learning when to protect what matters most. After years of making herself available around the clock, Kristie learned to establish boundaries and protect time with her family. She and her husband,



Kirk, an Army veteran, have a large blended family, grandchildren, and five dogs—and Kristie still loves getting outside, walking, going to the beach, hunting, and fishing with her family.

Still Here, Still Helping

Ask Kristie what she is most grateful for, and her answer puts everything else into perspective.

God’s mercy and strength.

Surviving Stage 3C breast cancer when the odds were against her has given Kristie a profound appreciation for simply being here—and an even greater



“ Having breast cancer taught me to be persistent and never give up.”



desire to use her life and experience to help someone else. In business, she hopes to leave a legacy of trust, education, relationships, and genuine care for people. In life, perhaps part of that legacy will be encouraging another woman facing breast cancer to take one more step: Ask questions. Research. Advocate for yourself. Learn what options may be available to you, and don’t be afraid to talk to someone who has walked the road before you.

Kristie has walked it, and she is still here to talk about it. 🍷



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SHANNON THOMPSON

Built Through **EVERY SEASON**

WRITTEN BY CHERIKA JOHNSON

Ask Shannon Thompson to describe herself in three words, and she doesn't hesitate: strong, smart, and independent. Those qualities have served her well throughout 21 years in real estate, but they were formed long before the transactions, clients, and multimillion-dollar production that would eventually define her career. In the past year, however, Shannon discovered just how much strength life would ask of her once again.

In 2025, a routine mammogram revealed a questionable mass. There was no family history. She had never felt a lump or experienced any problems. After a follow-up mammogram and ultrasound, Shannon was initially told it didn't appear concerning, but doctors wanted her to return in six months. When she did, everything changed. The mass had grown and was now suspicious. After discussing her options with her husband, Shannon chose to have a lumpectomy.

Then came the wait for pathology.

"It was cancer."



The diagnosis was DCIS—ductal carcinoma in situ—and estrogen-driven. Shannon had clean margins from surgery, and after meeting with her oncologist and radiologist, she learned her treatment plan would include 20 rounds of radiation without chemotherapy. The news brought questions she never imagined asking, including whether she had somehow caused it. At 50, she had been using doctor-prescribed

hormone therapy to manage the changes that come with aging. Now, she was told those medications would no longer be part of her life.

The physical changes were only part of what cancer changed.

"It was a big deal. It was a huge deal," Shannon says. "Cancer changes a person."

It made her think differently about what truly matters—

the experiences still waiting, the things she wants to accomplish, and even the parts of everyday life she'd taken for granted.

She began radiation the day after her 51st birthday and continued every day for four weeks. At first, she noticed little difference. As treatment progressed, however, came changes to her skin, fatigue and brain fog. "It was the longest time in my life."

Then came the final treatment. Surrounded by family and friends, Shannon rang the bell.

"I couldn't believe that I made it through it," she says. "I finished the hardest thing I've ever had to face in my medical history, and it has forever changed me. It made me stronger."

For Shannon, becoming a cancer survivor added another chapter to a life already shaped by learning how to keep moving forward when circumstances change the plan.

Strength Before the Storm
One of Shannon's earliest lessons in independence came in 2003. Pregnant

“**I FINISHED THE HARDEST THING**
I have ever had to face in my medical history, and it has forever changed me. Made me stronger.”



with her first child, she watched her husband, a Marine Corps veteran, deploy to Iraq. The couple had just moved into a home in Longview while still owning their first home in Marshall. With her husband overseas, Shannon prepared for motherhood while maintaining two properties, completing repairs and trying to sell their Marshall home. "That time in our life made me a strong and independent person and changed me forever," she says.

Unexpectedly, that season also helped move her toward a career that had already sparked her interest. Shannon first discovered real estate in college when she chose a real estate class as an elective and loved it. She also had an invaluable example close to home: her mother-in-law, a broker who spent more than 50 years in the industry.

After navigating her husband's deployment and handling their properties, earning her real estate license felt like a natural next step. Twenty-one years later, Shannon is a REALTOR® with Julie Woods and Associates and a consistent multimillion-dollar producer. But numbers have never defined her success. "Success is not about the dollars made or the number of transactions closed," she says. "I define success as being able to continue to do what I love year after year and having happy clients



that continue to either use me for future transactions or refer me to others.”

Relationships Over Transactions

Shannon wants the people she serves to feel like more than another name on a transaction file. She values genuine relationships, and many clients eventually become friends.

Her mother-in-law helped shape that approach. “She knew the business inside and out,” Shannon says. “She taught me many truths over the years about how people think and what works and doesn’t work in this business.”

Those lessons carried Shannon through changing

markets, including the 2008 recession when she was still relatively new to real estate. She kept working and continued closing transactions.

Today, she still loves what she calls “the thrill of the chase”—searching with buyers until they walk into a property and know, *This is the one*. There is equal satisfaction in helping a seller who truly needs to move a property get it sold. For Shannon, there is joy on both sides of the closing table.

More Than Real Estate

Real estate is only one part of Shannon’s entrepreneurial life. She and her husband have spent many years in the outdoor power business, watching it grow over the past two decades. More

recently, they launched Boulder Designs, offering customers unique, one-of-a-kind creations.

But family remains at the center of everything.

Shannon and her husband have been married 27 years and have two children. Their 23-year-old daughter graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and now teaches Pre-K at Hallsville North Elementary. Their 19-year-old son attends Hill College, where he plays third base while pursuing a degree in finance.

When Shannon steps away from work, she enjoys traveling, cruising, and spending time with family

and friends—preferably somewhere near the water. Her identity as part of a military family remains deeply important. The effects of war and PTSD did not simply disappear when her husband’s deployment ended. Their family still carries the sacrifices associated with military service.

Now, cancer has become part of that story too. Not the whole story. Another season.

Another reminder of what matters. Another experience that revealed the strength already there.

A Legacy of Working Together

Ask Shannon who inspires her, and family is at the top of the list. They motivate her to “be better, do better, and live better.” Above all, she credits God as her greatest source of inspiration and guidance. That faith took on even greater meaning during her cancer journey.

“I thank God every day for allowing me to be a cancer survivor.”

After 21 years in real estate, Shannon doesn’t want her legacy defined by sales numbers, awards,



or recognition. She wants to be remembered as someone who could work well with everyone. “We all have one goal, and that is to make happy buyers and sellers,” she says. “If we all work together with that goal in mind, we can accomplish anything.”

It is a fitting perspective from a woman whose life has repeatedly required her to adapt, endure, and keep moving forward. A military deployment. Motherhood. Changing markets. Entrepreneurship. Cancer. Each season has added something to her story without changing its foundation. Strong. Smart. Independent.

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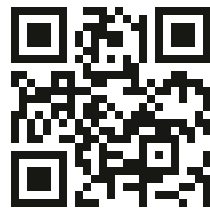
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Julie Maberry

Stronger Through the Fight

WRITTEN BY BELLA RUBIO
FEATURED PHOTOS BY BELLA RUBIO

October arrives draped in pink, a color that carries the weight of hope, strength, and unwavering support. It is my honor to introduce a REALTOR® whose story reflects those very qualities. From the heart of East Texas, Julie Maberry steps forward as a resilient fighter who stands victorious. With her title belt earned through courage and grit, she emerges triumphant over breast cancer and continues to persevere. She is a powerhouse REALTOR® who refuses to be held back. As she puts it, “When you have people to take care of, you don’t stop. You are determined to do it and get it done.”



Looking back, Julie remembers always wanting to pursue real estate. “Since I was in my early twenties, I always wanted to try real estate,” she shares. “I just never had the confidence that I could do it!” Five years into her real estate career, Julie has found not only confidence but success. Today, she continues to thrive under the leadership of her broker, Lori Arnold, at Coldwell Banker Apex. In 2025, she produced an impressive \$6.3+ million in volume, placing her among the top eight agents at the CBApex Tyler office. Each year, she sharpens her skills, laces up, and pours her energy into helping make East Texas home for her clients.

Even though the work is demanding, Julie finds deep meaning in it. “It is so wonderful to help first-time homebuyers get into homes and feel like I am making a difference in their lives,” she says. “Being able to walk clients through that transition is such an important part of my mission as a REALTOR®.” It is that fighting drive people see in Julie that allows them to trust her with one of the biggest transactions of their lives.



Nothing can stop Mrs. Maberry. She is a force who keeps pushing forward, and her faith is a big part of that strength. Within the first five months of becoming a REALTOR®, Julie was diagnosed with breast cancer in two places. A mother of three, with her ten-year-old daughter home for the summer, she remembers thinking, “God, how am I going to entertain her all summer?” Then came the reality: “I didn’t get to because it was cancer all summer. You know, the things we dread



“When you have **PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF**, you don’t stop. You are determined to do it and get it done.”

or worry about daily, I was like, dang, I’d give anything to get to entertain my daughter all summer.”

Throughout her recovery, Julie kept working. She completed four months of chemotherapy while remaining available to her clients every day. After one of her surgeries, she drove all the way to Flower Mound to show a home to buyers who had already sold their house, and they insisted on keeping Julie as their REALTOR®. She had made a promise, and she intended to keep it. She remembers sitting at the bottom of the stairs during that showing, exhausted but determined. “I felt bad, but they had to buy a house because they already sold, and I had a family and my son’s college tuition to pay, so I kept going.”

Julie also had a solid team behind her. “You don’t get through this without all your people; you can’t!” Friends cooked meals for her family every day for five months. Others stepped in whenever help was needed. Fellow REALTORS® asked, “What can I do to help?” Then came the sweetest surprise of all: her husband, David, earned his real estate license while she was undergoing surgeries so he could help keep her business

moving forward. “He would come home and then stay up all night studying,” she recalls.

Together, David and Julie became the perfect duo. Julie communicated with clients, David showed houses, then called her to discuss the details, and Julie wrote the contracts. It was crucial for Julie to limit her exposure to others while recovering, especially with COVID still circulating. As she shared this part of her story, she paused and took a breath, her eyes softening with emotion. “He’s lovely... yeah, he’s lovely,” she said. “You learn what people are made of when stuff happens.” And although Julie spent her first year in real estate battling breast cancer, she still managed to produce an astonishing \$6,976,500—a remarkable achievement by any measure.

When asked who has helped shape the person she is today, Julie points first to her faith. “My faith. I am not perfect, that’s for sure, but I try to always treat people with the kindness and respect they deserve. I love the saying, ‘Treat people like Jesus died for them.’ I mean, that kind of says it all for me.” Her family has also played a profound role. Her father was a Marine, and



CONTINUED ►



she was “raised with a standard of ‘if it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing it right.’” Her son has also deeply influenced her journey. She shares that, “my son who is now sober from drugs and alcohol has played a HUGE role in shaping who I am because my journey with him has taught me that LOVE conquers all things, including pride.” And, she adds, “the rest of my family shapes who I am every day by loving me and tolerating me, because this business can make you crazy and the hours are crazy.”

Though the hours and the business may be crazy, Mrs. Maberry works hard and refuses to give up. To Julie, professional success comes when “my phone rings and someone says, ‘I TRUST You to represent me’ through the most important transaction of my life, buying or selling my home.” Personally, success means “holding my marriage and family together! Sometimes it’s hanging by a thread!”

Discussing what sets her apart from her peers, Julie says, “I think I have always been different from everyone because I am a big old nerd.” But behind that self-described nerdiness is a heart that genuinely cares. “I cry when people tell me about their kids. I call my clients to see how their baby is after getting vaccinations. I show up with dinner a year after someone buys a house from me because they have breast cancer.” She quickly adds that she doesn’t share these things to brag. When Julie was battling breast cancer, she was surrounded by women who cared for her, and that experience changed her. “I now feel like I want to help take care of other people. I truly care about all my clients like they are my family! I love them like they are my family.”

Her fighting spirit and love of serving others show in everything she does. Julie is passionate about “finding the right home at the right time for buyers” and helping clients stay within their budgets. She shares, “I know from personal experience that circumstances can change. I never want a client to lose their home because they are teetering on the edge of not being able to afford their home.” Relationships—and giving her all to the people she serves—are at the heart of her business. Her motto says it best: “I always go above and beyond; I feel like clients deserve that! If I’m not going above and beyond, find another REALTOR® who will.”

Outside of real estate, Julie is deeply passionate about her family. She and David have built a 27-year marriage while

raising their three children: Austin, Carter, and Gabby Grace. “My wonderful family... they are my life. Period,” she says. They also remain closely connected to both sides of their extended family. “Both our parents have been married for many years, and we’re so close to them,” Julie shares. David’s parents have been married for more than 60 years, while Julie’s parents were married for 55 years when her father passed away in May. This beautiful legacy of love and commitment continues to shape their family’s story.

When she is not working, Julie loves going to concerts—a passion sparked when David surprised her with Lionel Richie tickets for her 50th birthday. “I had never been to a concert



before, and I’m in LOVE with L.R., and I’m hooked! We’ve been to a few since then. I love concerts!” she says. She also shares a fun fact: she has seven siblings, and her children are spaced nine years apart. “It’s so weird having three ‘only’ children!” One of her favorite quotes is, “A healthy man has 1,000 wishes, a sick man has only one,” a sentiment that resonates deeply with her. “It may sound odd, but if you’ve ever been sick, you understand. If you have

your health, you have EVERYTHING. Money can be made. Most of what we worry about won’t matter. Trust me, whatever you’re stressing over today wouldn’t matter a hill of beans if you heard the words, ‘You have cancer’ later today. Keep that in mind. I sound so wise, but I still worry about silly things too.” The three words she says best describe her are honest, hardworking, and dedicated.

After sharing these personal details, Julie shifted to the lessons she had learned along the way. When asked what she would tell new agents to expect, she said, “Buckle up! It’s going to be the bumpiest and most fun ride you’ve ever been on, and we’re all here to help you!” Her advice for those battling breast cancer carries that same strength: “Remember this isn’t forever. Today may be awful, but your hair will grow back. Some changes will be permanent, and you will be changed, but those changes are also good. I’m a better person now than I was before.”

Her commitment and the ability to stay on her feet, even when the hits come hard, are what make Julie remarkable at what she does. October’s pink reminds us of battles fought and victories earned, and her journey stands among them, marked by faith, determination, and the power of unity when others step in to fight beside you. She fought for her life, her family, and her clients, and she conquered every round. Her story does not just reflect October’s meaning; it captures the truth that breast cancer may strike hard, but warriors like Julie strike harder and conquer. 🍷



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FAQS

ALL ABOUT EAST TEXAS Real Producers

Q: Who Receives This Magazine?

A: The top 300 agents in East Texas based on volume for the previous year and our Preferred Partners. There are thousands of agents in the region and you, in this elite group, are the cream of the crop. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication, and proficiency.

Q: Do Real Estate Agents Have To Pay For Magazines Or Events?

A: NO! The magazine and events are FREE to agents and funded by the partners who advertise.

Q: What Kind Of Content Will Be Featured?

A: This is all about you. We'll do personal and unique stories on members in the community, providing you with a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we'll add fresh content focused entirely on you. It costs absolutely nothing for a REALTOR® to be featured. We are not a pay to play model; we write real stories, about Real Producers, and we're always accepting nominations. We will consider anyone brought to our attention— we don't know everyone's story so we need your help to learn about them!

Q: Who Are Our Partners?

A: Anyone listed as a "Preferred Partner" in the front of the magazine is funding and fueling this community



and is an essential part of it. They are the top professionals in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine and attend our events. One or many of you have recommended every single Preferred Partner you see in this publication. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area, but the best affiliates as well, so we can grow stronger together.

Q: Does Real Producers Have Events?

A: Yes! Along with the magazine, we will host quarterly events exclusive to this community, where you—the

best of the best—get together at local venues to socialize, mastermind, deepen our connections, and better our businesses. We will communicate about events through the magazine and on social media.

Q: How Can I Recommend A Business Or Feature Story?

A: If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® to be featured, know of top-notch affiliate partners who you believe should be a part of our community, or would simply like to network; email or call us. I look forward to hearing from you!

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