

# CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2005

## Laurie's Speech at Temple Adath Yeshurun

I've been fighting breast cancer on a public level and a private level for eight years and it has given way to many miracles.

I became involved with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation because I walked into a room of electrified women on a January weeknight, while they were planning the most incredible event, our Race for the Cure. I started fundraising because we raise our money locally and we distribute it locally. Going through my own battle with breast cancer allowed me to see a more vivid picture of what happens when you have no insurance, out of work or impoverished. Experiencing this discrepancy from my point of view helped me determine what I was here to do for others.

Funding an underserved or medically uninsured woman is an incredible notion and one of great inspiration for me. I'm fortunate and thank God every day that I'm able to afford my illness. I cringe when I see my bills, knowing that there are women out there who suffer those costs. I could be there just as easily. And it makes me sorrowful to think of the immense physical, spiritual and financial duress this disease brings.

So, when Komen gives back \$300,000–\$400,000 every year to our community to fund mammograms and sonograms, diagnostic procedures, and education outreach workers, I feel like we are taking a bite out of that pie. We are the only ones who provide funding for women under 40. That directly plays into where I am at today. And, it's no coincidence.

I could have never imagined this world of opportunities and possibilities. And now it has led me to create my own foundation, named on behalf of Saint Agatha, the patron saint of breast health.

If not for my work with Komen, I would have never met Barbara Holstein who introduced me to Dr. Wong. And because of him, I have become bolstered in my own fight against breast cancer.

I will always be thankful that volunteering my time enriched my soul, widened my tolerances and fueled my generosity. Despite my recurrences of cancer during those years, it was a dazzling time in my life.

My illness came with a gift. As my health worsened, the gift got sweeter. With every ache, pain and strain, came levity, faith, and hope. With every burst of drama, anxiety or fear came the slow steady tread of peaceful living. I see so many survivors of breast cancer that have that same vibe about them. The greatest gift of all is the ability to look at the people you love, know that this is all fragile, that our moments, all of them are special and that time starts now.