

In 2021, Teri F. developed a persistent cough. An X-Ray in the ER showed no issues. In May, she went to her primary care doctor, who referred her to a pulmonologist for more answers. At the time, the pulmonologist assured her this was 99% asthma, gave her an inhaler, and told her to come back in three months.

Over the summer, Teri and her husband went to England for their anniversary. "I remember feeling really good during that trip. I didn't have any other symptoms. We were very active, and everything seemed fine," she recalls.

Teri's persistent cough convinced her that asthma was not the problem. In September, she received a CT scan revealing she had stage 4 lung cancer with an EGFR mutation. As a nonsmoker and active mom of three children, lung cancer was not a diagnosis Teri was expecting.

"When the doctor told me I had lung cancer, it felt like a wave of grief hit me and I was on the bottom of the ocean, grieving for my life and my future. It was hard to remain positive, and embracing the situation took me a little while."

Teri credits getting involved with A Breath of Hope's community as one of the ways that helped her have a more positive outlook. "I enjoy reading all of the stories on A Breath of Hope's website of people who used their time for advocacy. It gives me great hope." Teri specifically remembers reading Katherine Bensen's story and was moved by Katherine's ability to bring awareness and light while holding on to her positive attitude. She also admires and is inspired by the advocacy work of other young women like Julie Swedberg and Shelly Engfer Triebenbach. "It helped me think about how I want to spend my days."

Today, Teri is taking Tagrisso as her targeted therapy for her EGFR mutation, and she recently had surgery to remove the lower left lobe of her lung, her lung lining, and a few lymph nodes. She is an active advocate for lung cancer patients by raising awareness, testifying in Washington D.C. for greater funding, and standing up for equity in biomarker testing.

"I firmly believe that we are all in this together. Whether you smoked or didn't smoke, in the end, it doesn't matter. We all need to come together to move past the stigma in order to get the funding lung cancer deserves."

