Heroic Young Mom Channels Wonder Woman, Inspires 5K in Breast Cancer Battle

Throughout her journey she drew on the power of her childhood hero, Wonder Woman: Her favorite Halloween costume.

By Angie Crouch

A young mom channeled Wonder Woman when she battled breast cancer, inspiring others to fight harder. Angie Crouch reports for the NBC4 News at 11. (Published Monday, Oct. 19, 2015)

A breast cancer diagnosis is devastating for any woman, but particularly for a young mother, like Jessica Berman, who lost her battle with cancer. Berman's husband is now honoring her memory by turning his grief into a movement to save others.

Berman seemed to have it all. The Wilmington, California, native was a beauty queen, a successful investment banker, and a loving wife and mother.
In 2010, at the age of 34, she and her husband David received some devastating news from their doctor. Berman was five months pregnant with her second child at the time.

"It was breast cancer – we panicked," David Berman said. "We didn't know what to do."

Jessica Berman fought hard, undergoing chemo and radiation even after giving birth to her son Leo.

Throughout her journey, she drew on the power of her childhood hero and favorite Halloween costume: Wonder Woman.

"She embodied that heroine in her life and in her battle against breast cancer," David Berman said.

Jessica Berman became an activist, raising money and awareness about breast cancer. She mentored other women with the disease, like Suzanne Asherson.

"She emailed me on some of the scariest days of my life," said Asherson, a breast cancer survivor.

Asherson said she didn't know how sick Jessica Berman was when she wrote the following email shortly before she died.

"Fear not – you will get through this. It won't be easy at times but you will kiss your son before you go to chemo and you'll have fire and passion in your belly to kill this beast," the email read.

Asherson did beat cancer, and now volunteers her own time raising money for Tower Cancer Research Foundation.

It was there she met David Berman, the husband of the woman who'd kept her going through her darkest days.

He had no idea his wife had been secretly helping strangers like Asherson.

"It doesn't – sorry," David Berman said, breaking down into tears. "It doesn't surprise me, knowing Jessica, her desire to help others."

He decided to carry on his wife's desire to help others by starting the Wonder Woman 5K Walk for Breast Cancer.

In September, 1,100 people showed up and raised more than a half-million dollars.

"It was something I'll never forget – just the feeling in the air," David Berman said. "The love and positive energy. A wonderful day."

Asherson and her family were there, along with many others dressed in their favorite super hero costumes, including Jessica Berman's son Leo and her 6-year-old daughter Abby, who was wearing her mom's Wonder Woman boots.

They're one family paying it forward, one step at a time.

"For me, it was a decision to do whatever I could for the next Jessica," David said.

For more information on the Wonder Woman Walk's yearly event to help breast cancer research, click here.