

A 30-Year Old Mami-To-Be Battling Breast Cancer

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Roxy, before and after her diagnosis

This post was written by Ashley Cisneros, about her best friend Roxy

My Friend Roxy

When I used to think of my friend Roxy, I pictured a fun-loving, hilarious girl who knew how to switch from a no-nonsense-it's-just-business professional to a double-dog-dare-me party girl. Today, I picture Roxy as a warrior who is giving life while fighting like hell for her own.

I met Roxanne Rae Martinez when I was an impressionable 19-year-old dreamer trying to find her place at a university with more than 54,000 students. Roxy was a few years older than me and we shared the same major. We were members of the same Latina-based sorority, Lambda Theta Alpha, and she taught me a lot about business. She was the first to arrive to a party, and also the first to arrive to a community service ... and the last to leave following clean-up. She didn't just cheer on her favorite team, the Dallas Cowboys, but played football herself, and coached her nephews' football team.



Me (far right) spending the night at Roxy's (far left) place during freshman year. Roxy's brother, Adam, was visiting that summer.

During college, we skipped class one day to hang out at a nearby spring. Roxy made us girls leave the spring because she remembered that she had to turn in a literary journalism paper. We pulled the car up to the curb in front of the journalism school, and she jumped out, padded down the walkway barefoot and turned in her paper — dripping wet in her swimsuit and a beach towel. Always looking for a good time, Roxy joked that she started running 5ks

because of the free beer served afterward.

But Roxy has always worked harder than she played. She worked multiple jobs to put herself through school, plus pay for her younger brothers and sisters to have nice things. I remember her working extra hours in order to buy her brother a high school class ring. When a sorority sister fell on hard times, Roxy would take her in, no questions asked.

Roxy's Life Changed Forever Last Fall.

Being that October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Roxy donated to some of our pals who were participating in the Susan G. Komen Making Strides event in South Florida. While breast cancer doesn't run in her family, Roxy decided to do a self breast exam and found a lump. **A visit to a doctor on Nov. 1 confirmed the unthinkable. Roxy was diagnosed with Triple Negative Breast Cancer, and found out that she is pregnant for the very first time.** Before she had time to fully absorb what was happening, Roxy had to undergo a Modified Radical Mastectomy that completely removed her left breast and some lymph nodes under her arm.

She began 2011 with grueling chemotherapy that usually knocks her out for a week straight afterward and turns her stomach inside out. The doctors say that the particular chemo drug she is getting has been administered in pregnant women with very little harm to the baby. Of course, they can never guarantee 100 percent, but research shows that it most commonly results in low birth weight or premature labor, and birth defects are very minimal.

Right before that fateful visit to the doctor, Roxy had just started a new job she loved. After her diagnosis, Roxy was terminated from her job because she did not qualify for short-term disability or the Family & Medical Leave Act yet.

“You know I didn't even really cry when I found out I had cancer,” Roxy confessed to me during one late-night phone call. “But I cried out when I lost my job.”

Working is part of Roxy's identity — she's never had less than two jobs in her adult life. For the first time, she is unemployed. Roxy's treatment, even with health insurance, can run anywhere from \$8-14K on top of what's covered by insurance. Roxy is and always has been a fighter. For the first time, the woman who has been the rock in her family, the hero to her nephews and niece, the spirit of our sorority, and the most independent, industrious woman I know needs *help*.

“Team Roxy” Groups Formed to Raise Money for Treatment

A natural social strategist, Roxy leveraged Facebook and Twitter to keep concerned friends and family all over the world in the know about her condition. Initial shock quickly transformed into action, and before long an international grass roots volunteer effort was ignited. Roxy's loved ones formed “Team Roxy” groups in 20 cities including San Juan, Puerto Rico and Toronto, Canada to raise money for Roxy's lifesaving treatments.





The last time I spoke to Roxy, she told me, *“I just can’t wait to beat this damn cancer so that I can start helping other women get educated about the risks of breast cancer. I have a new calling.”*

Roxy is Part of a National Research Effort to Help Other Pregnant Women Fight Cancer

In fact, Roxy is part of a national research effort to help other pregnant women fighting cancer, and their babies. After Roxy’s baby is born, she will send her placenta to Dr. Elyce Cardonick in New Jersey for the Cancer and Pregnant Registry. Dr. Cardonick was recently featured in a [Today Show and msnbc.com](#) report about a pregnant mother fighting cancer.

While an internal war rages in Roxy’s petite body between the cancer that’s trying to claim her life, and the brutal chemo treatments that are trying to kill the cancer, a beautiful baby girl is growing in Roxy’s womb. **Her name? Milagros.**



“If you thought my bucket list was amazing before, you haven’t seen anything yet,” Roxy told me recently. *“I’ve got so much living to do.”*

To donate to Roxy’s cancer treatment fund, please visit [Team Roxy](#).

Recent & Upcoming Team Roxy events:

3/12 Dance Party – Totowa, NJ

3/14 – 3/18 Breast Cancer Forum, Penny War and Dance Party at Univ. of Florida – Gainesville, FL

3/24 BBQ Fundraiser – Fort Worth, TX

3/24 Tapas and Sangria Happy Hour – Orlando, FL

3/26 Salsa Boot Camp & Dance Party – Atlanta, GA

3/26 Networking Happy Hour – Washington, DC

3/30 Bowling for Roxy – Boston, MA

4/2 Fundraising Dinner –Boca Raton, FL

4/13 Networking Social – NYC, NY

4/16 Dance Party – Charlotte, NC

4/24 Happy Hour – Boise, ID

6/11 Mexican Bingo (Loteria) & Community BBQ- Houston, TX

Events in development

Chicago, LA, Memphis, Michigan, San Diego, Puerto Rico, Tampa, Toronto

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