

# **Becky Ellison trusts God and serves while battling cancer**

November 15, 2018

Becky Ellison knows what it means to live one day at a time. Since being diagnosed with cancer in 2010, she said a key question guides her: “If I had one more minute and I wanted to live it like God wanted me to live it, what would that look like?”

For Ellison, part of that answer involves investing in the lives of Christian Women’s Job Corps and Christian Men’s Job Corps leaders throughout Texas.

Ellison, who holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work from Baylor University, has been involved 14 years in the job training and life-skills ministries. She began serving as a contract consultant with Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas in 2008.

Six years later—and four years after her diagnosis—she was invited to serve as the state WMU’s full-time strategist for Christian Women’s Job Corps and Christian Men’s Job Corps. That role involves consulting with 56 ministry sites throughout Texas.

## **‘I know where you’re coming from’**

She vividly recalls when Sandy Wisdom-Martin, who was then executive director-treasurer of Texas WMU and now serves the same role with national WMU, invited her to accept the strategist position.

“The one thing I prayed about was, ‘Lord, what do you want me to do in this role?’ He was really clear that he wanted me to minister to our

leadership, because they are in the trenches, they are the ones sacrificing so much day-to-day for the men and women who come through our doors,” Ellison said.

“They’re dealing with cancer, they’re dealing with family members who have illnesses, they’re dealing with crises,” she explained.

Her goal is “to be able to encourage them, to pray with them, to give grace when grace needs to happen,” she said.

Even when the ministry sites’ coordinators, mentors and volunteers are in the midst of challenging days, Ellison said she seeks to remind them: “God gave you today. What are we going to do with it?”

Amid life’s struggles, Ellison also is able to assure each of the leaders, “I know where you’re coming from.”

## **The journey began**

Her journey with cancer began during a summer family outing in 2010.

“You never know where God’s going to take you,” she said. “We were just having fun playing on the water in our boat.”

Thinking that she had hurt her back during the excursion, she went to an urgent care center to evaluate her back pain. The doctor ordered an MRI and told her they would call her in a couple of days with the results.

Instead, she recalled, “They called me back in two hours because a radiologist had called the doctor and said, ‘Does this woman know she has cancer?’”

While driving through Waco, Ellison said, she received the unexpected diagnosis in a phone call from the urgent care physician.

“We talked and at that moment I just said, ‘Well, let’s just see what God does with this journey,’” she reflected.

## **‘I’m still blessed’**

Affirming that God’s promises never change, she said: “I just knew it was going to be a new season. The blessing of that is the doctor on the phone with me said, ‘Can I pray with you?’ So this journey was bathed in prayer from the very beginning.”

It took doctors 18 months after the initial diagnosis to determine what kind of cancer Ellison has—a rare form that currently has no approved treatment.

“It’s slow-growing, which is a blessing,” she said. “But God has just been faithful through the whole thing. I tell people now, ‘This has been the most blessed season of my life other than marrying my husband and having my child.’ It’s been a great faith journey.”

In 2012, Ellison’s doctor told her with the tumors growing, she likely would be paralyzed within three months. Instead, she continued to trust God’s plan and timing for her life and illness. She went back to her co-workers and told them: “You guys don’t worry about this. God’s got this.”

“Of course, that was six years ago,” she recounted with a broad smile. “God really did a miracle healing. I walked away from the hospital and was pain-free. I hike nine miles, I exercise, I ride bikes. I haven’t been in treatment since then. I asked God to let this be a testimony of his still doing miracles, and let me be a testimony of having faith to know that he lets us go through seasons. If this is my season and it ends with this, then I’m still blessed.”

## **‘God’s got this’**

Wisdom-Martin, who has worked closely with Ellison in recent years, affirmed her colleague’s unwavering faith and focus.

“I witnessed an amazing Christ-follower face disappointment and suffering without sinking into despair,” she said. “At her core is the strength to persevere. She is clearly focused on eternity.”

Ellison’s “passion and commitment to the task at hand never faltered once,” Wisdom-Martin added.

“All the while, she would whisper in our ears, ‘God’s got this.’ No matter what mountain I face, I carry her words in my heart as encouragement to take the next step,” she said. “I am proud of Becky and her devotion to the cause of Christ.”

As she works to facilitate ministry for the benefit of Christian Women’s Job Corps and Christian Men’s Job Corps participants, Ellison said a primary motivation is “getting to invest in them and love on them as they go through their journey.”

“The core of Christian Women’s and Christian Men’s Job Corps is about relationships,” she explained. Participants often come out of backgrounds in human trafficking, incarceration, addictions, abuse or generational poverty, she added.

With ministry sites providing participants resources such as job-readiness training, parenting classes, mentoring and Bible study, she said: “We see transformation. We see families being healed.

“It is a ministry that empowers men and women to grow spiritually, personally and professionally,” she said, adding that it also has a positive community impact.

“If we’re empowering men and women to be more whole and healthy and restore families and have living wages, then our communities are better.”

As she maintains her faith perspective amid the challenges of life, Ellison acknowledged, “Even hearing that you have cancer changes your lens.”

“Every day, I get up and say, ‘Thank you, God, for waking me up today,’” she reflected. “The lens it changes is: ‘This possibly could be my last day. What do I get to do today?’”

For Ellison, the answer is clear: Keep trusting that “God’s got this”—regardless of what tomorrow holds.

*Trennis Henderson is national correspondent for Woman’s Missionary Union.*