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BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS

**TINA HOLT &
ALAN THOMPSON**

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Tina Holt

TWO-TIME BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR

In 2002, Tina Holt was selling real estate in Roanoke, VA, where she spent the first 13 and a half years of her career. She vividly recalls being a 37-year-old mom of three sons 20 years ago and answering a phone call from her physician, who informed her that the lump she had found in her breast was, indeed, cancer.

Tina, now the senior regional vice-president of Long & Foster Real Estate for Hampton Roads and Northeastern North Carolina, would go on to have a lumpectomy, then 18 rounds of chemo, then 26 radiation treatments. She would also return to work selling real estate a few days after surgery and buy and flip her first house during this most difficult time. She would survive and thrive and ultimately, in 2005, land in North Carolina, where, in 2016, she received another breast cancer diagnosis in the same breast — not a recurrence but a completely different

form of cancer, this one triple negative, meaning that Tina was not eligible for many effective and life-saving treatments. Still, she fought back.

“The first time was a battle; the second time was a war,” Tina said of her approach to her second go-round with treatment, which included a double mastectomy, DIEP flap reconstruction and more chemo — no radiation this time because it cannot be delivered in the same place twice. Tina also embraced a healthy lifestyle of clean eating and exercise, and, like she did during her first dance with breast cancer, she hopped right back in the saddle. “I was my only source of income, and not working was not an option,” Tina said.

Six years after the second diagnosis, Tina, whose sons are grown and have given her a combined six grandchildren, seems to be at the top of her game. She is quick to point out, though, that she always has room to grow as she pursues the next level. The Long & Foster leader also manages branch offices and works from Williamsburg to the Outer Banks and has an office in Kitty Hawk and covers the Eastern Shore. She is a certified speaker and life and leadership coach, as well as an author of the Amazon International Best Seller *Green Bananas*.

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Just before her second diagnosis, Tina would often respond to long-distance plans with, “I don’t even buy green bananas.” Just prior to treatments, Tina was having lunch with two Long & Foster colleagues. Before they all departed from lunch, one of the colleagues, a good friend, requested a favor from Tina. “Please start buying green bananas,” she said.

Tina says the term *green bananas* is a twofold metaphor. “It was my auto-response about planning anything too far out,” she said. “The other part is that we cannot have the life we want until we dare to be a green banana.” In her book, Tina inspires readers how to find the life they have been searching for.

Tina buys green bananas now. Having breast cancer twice taught her to never take today for granted, but it also inspired her to look ahead. “Planning for this weekend or for what you want to do this evening is OK, but booking that cruise for a year from now is also OK,” Tina said.

Post-cancer, Tina is feeling well as she powers on in her career, staying true to her passion for adding value and helping people reach their highest potential.

In the spirit of helping others, Tina shares the following wisdom she gleaned from cancer.

- A healthy personal and professional environment is so important.
- A healthy circle is critical. Be around those who support you and your goals.
- Avoid pessimists.
- Wherever you are at the moment, be there.
- Self-care is critically important.
- Know what you want the rest of your life to look like, personally, professionally, geographically, etc. It may change, and that’s OK.
- Create great memories with family and friends.

- When you have the intuition that you should call or visit someone, don’t delay.
- Do the things that bring you joy.
- Don’t take anyone or anything for granted.
- If you think any day is a bad day, try missing one.
- Meet people where they are.
- Leave everything and everyone better than you found them.

Tina, an avid reader of self-help books, believes that people love reading stories because they allow them to relate with others, validate their human condition and forge onward. We agree, and we are so grateful that Tina has shared her story with us.

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