

Lauren Simpson's cancer journey was filled with surprises, including pregnancy and a career change
Simpson is one of 20 cancer survivors recognized in the Faces of Hope gallery at the Harbin Clinic Cancer Center

ROME, GA., May 4, 2026 – David Simpson posted a picture of his wife, Lauren, to his Facebook page on Dec. 14, 2019.

Lauren Simpson is walking down Broad Street in Rome, holding the hand of their daughter, Sadie, who is sporting a cheetah print jacket and black cat ears. She is smiling with her eyes. She was clearly happy and had no idea that she would be diagnosed with cancer just a few weeks later.

The 34-year-old wife and mother discovered a lump in her breast in early 2020. She followed up with her family physician, who recommended a mammogram. Two days later, Simpson learned she had breast cancer, becoming 1 of 8 women diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. She would need surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

Each person's cancer journey is unique to the individual. In Simpson's case, cancer yielded five scary, tragic, difficult, beautiful, exciting surprises that are now a part of her survivor's story. Simpson is one of 20 cancer survivors recognized in the Faces of Hope gallery at the Harbin Clinic Cancer Center, 255 W. Fifth St. in Rome.

Cancer was Simpson's first surprise of 2020.

Following a February surgery, Simpson was scheduled to begin chemotherapy in March.

Then, she said, "the world shut down."

The COVID-19 pandemic meant Simpson would be alone for significant parts of her treatment, beginning with surgery to place a port through which she would receive potentially lifesaving drugs.

If cancer was her first surprise, the pandemic was the second, and Simpson was caught completely off guard by the third.

Prepped for a surgical procedure to place a port where the chemo could flow straight into her body, someone on her care team called a time out. Simpson's labs revealed another surprise. She was pregnant.

Her oncologist, Dr. Melissa Dillmon, gave her a difficult choice. She could terminate the pregnancy and begin chemotherapy immediately, or she could continue her pregnancy and delay treatment for several weeks. Simpson had lost two other pregnancies, and she wanted more children. She decided to delay her treatment.

"We ultimately decided it was in God's hands. We wanted to have another baby," she said.

The reality of having cancer while pregnant during a pandemic meant Simpson had to go to her prenatal and oncology appointments alone. In addition, she was homeschooling her daughter to avoid the risk of her bringing infections home while Simpson was in treatment.

Simpson finished chemo in October, and, yes, she rang the bell signaling the end of her treatment.

“I’m usually a strong, brave-face kind of person,” Simpson said, “but when I rang that bell, tears just poured down my face. I think it was the combination of realizing, ‘Oh my gosh, I actually finished this and I’m still pregnant.’ I had never carried a baby that far in a pregnancy. This had felt like the longest months of my life, and I was finally done.”

Her son, Isaac, was born Oct. 30, just a couple of weeks after finishing treatment. His name is a reference to the Biblical story of Abraham and Sarah.

“God told them, ‘I’m going to give you a baby,’ and Sarah laughed. Then God asked, ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’” Simpson said. “The chances of this baby surviving were not good. But God proved the statistics wrong. With Isaac having to go through the chemo with me, I knew that was the perfect name.”

Simpson’s journey also required 27 radiation treatments that came after Isaac was born. That was five years ago.

Simpson recently completed treatment for a second occurrence of breast cancer. Her son, Isaac, is 5 and “living his best pre-K life.” And Simpson has a new career — yet another unexpected surprise along her journey.

While homeschooling their daughter during her treatment, Simpson discovered she really enjoyed teaching. She quit her job in marketing and began teaching kindergarten. And on May 1, she received her master’s degree in early childhood education from Reinhardt University.

About Atrium Health Floyd

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About Atrium Health

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About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](#) is the third-largest nonprofit, integrated health system in the United States, created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and Atrium Health. Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](#) in Illinois; [Atrium Health](#) in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama; and [Aurora Health Care](#) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health services nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Advocate Health is nationally recognized for its expertise in heart and vascular, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs more than 160,000 teammates across 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations, and offers one of the nation’s largest graduate medical education programs with over

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