

BAMBI FAMOUS KAINE

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Cancer (which she is chairing this month) or the recent Pink Heals Tour in Sarasota or her work as a board member for the American Cancer Society.

Bambi is the envy of any cause needing a can-do person. But for now, her focus is breast cancer. It's literally close to her heart, not just as a woman, but for the fact she was diagnosed with cancer three years ago. And she'll tell you that in her own direct, but disarming way.



About this photo: These are Bambi's "friends and fellow survivors who have been by my side for this journey. In Bambi's words they are, starting clockwise at right, Pamela Kelly, ARNP, "long-time unconditional friend and my private duty nurse through all of my surgeries. Major breast cancer advocate and supporter of the cause and me. Shawn Schroeders: "greatest neighbor in the world; long time

friend aka "Maguiver". Shawnee has adorned our neighborhood with pink on multiple occasions and created flags of support for all of our events." Angela Long, Linda Sloan, Joann Hampton (top) "are all breast cancer survivors whom I've met through ACS and are on the MSABC executive committee as Chairs. All three are incredible advocates for the cause and dynamic women." Fred Lopez: One of the kindest men

(besides my hubby!), greatest cook, entertainer and major advocate for our MSABC committee who is a survivor of life's events, including 911 in NYC and a widower. Fred can never do enough for our cause."

In the center: Bambi Famous Kaine. "I am honored and blessed to have these wonderful human beings by my side and our world is a better place to have them as advocates for the cause.

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It’s also that way with her name. She smiles before you even ask, as if she anticipates the question. Yes, she’s been called things like “Bambino” and signing off as B. Famous draws concerns from people thinking they’re being sold something. But it’s not the kind of thing that would bother this driven advocate.

Life started out positively for this Pennsylvania native who became an RN after attending Villanova University. Her dad, an anesthesiologist, was a “huge” influence on her career choice and she used to tag along with him to the hospital when he made rounds. In PA, Bambi worked as a RN but, given her extroverted personality, it’s easy to see why sales were in her future. For the past 15 years she’s worked in pharmaceutical sales with Merck. When she started, she was offered a job transfer and the short list was Daytona, St. Pete or Sarasota. She jumped at Sarasota as she had vacationed here in the past.

A story like Bambi’s is a strong one with great meaning because it comes not just from her experience with breast cancer, but with the tragic loss she experienced in 2006. It’s a parent’s worst nightmare: a teenager in a car traveling with friends at night. The nightmare became reality in June of that year when Bambi got the news that her daughter Katelyn was killed while traveling with friends to Tennessee for the Bonnaroo Music Festival. Her grief, she admits, was crushing and yet somehow, some way, she forged ahead and one of her first acts was constructive: she started the nonprofit Katelyn Joy Derstine Scholarship Fund, Inc. (www.fly-high-kjd.com). The Fund gives out scholarship money to students from Riverview High School where Katelyn graduated from. So far \$40,00 has been given out and this year a mentoring program has been added and 65 freshmen have been paired up with seniors.

In a calm but direct way Bambi wrote on the web site how she lost her daughter just, “twelve hours after we, as a family, celebrated my birthday together ... So my last loving moments with Katelyn were on my birthday.” True to her forward thinking and positive nature she goes on to write, “This year I am blessed to be breast cancer free, welcoming

the anticipation of my milestone 50th.”

Bambi also owns and manages a property on Siesta Key called Casa de Mariposa (butterfly house). Among the things her daughter left behind was a drawing of a butterfly she had done. Now the butterfly in various forms is “visible” as a butterfly garden at the University of Florida where Katelyn was a student and, on the gates to Casa de Mariposa. In keeping with Bambi’s generous spirit, the property is donated six weeks a year to different charities, such as the Make a Wish Foundation, to be offered at auction to raise money for the specific organization. Each holiday she hosts a Compassionate Friends event at her home for those who have experienced a personal loss. Everyone goes home with an ornament—a chrysalis—that, when opened days later, releases a butterfly.

When she decided she was ready to go back to work Bambi found out she had breast cancer. She recalls the date: 9/11/07. An aggressive tumor meant a double mastectomy followed by six months of chemotherapy. Her surgery was done a week after her diagnosis. At the same time she learned about Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, the crowd-drawing walk put on by the American cancer Society every year. Yep, you guessed it—she got involved—completing the walk just six weeks after surgery and a week into chemotherapy.

Even with her job as Nurse Recruiter at Sarasota Memorial, Bambi is this year’s Chair of Making Strides as it marks its 10th anniversary. Held at the Sarasota Polo Grounds, last year it drew 8500 walks of all ages and sizes—some cancer survivors, some walking for loved ones who did not survive. Her team, “Bam’s Brigade,” raised \$14,000 last year and the goal this year is \$20,000. This month she’ll be leading what she hopes will be 10,000 women and men in the 5k walk.

“Why am I walking? I’m walking to create a world with less breast cancer and more birthdays,” she writes online. “I am extremely passionate about doing my part as a survivor, mother, wife, daughter, sister, aunt, friend and community member and to be an ambassador for the fight against breast cancer. It is because of the American Cancer Society... that I have the privilege to walk breast cancer free...” Bambi’s family includes her son, Dane Derstine, 22 and the two children of her husband of 10 years, Jeffrey Kaine, a rheumatologist in Sarasota who has a daughter Judy, age 27, and a son, Dan, who is 25.

In 2009 the American Cancer Society presented Bambi with the “Courage Award” for both the region and the state of Florida. On the award she reflects, “I was not only humbled but honored and grateful for the many people in my life who provided me with the strength, love and support to give me the courage to maintain my sense of humor, dignity, pride, positive attitude and drive. Oh, and of course, many thanks to my medical team for the new boobs!” And that’s quintessential Bambi. ☺

STORY: Louise Bruderle
PHOTO: Evelyn England