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YTI honors graduate who survived cancer for commitment

By **MOLLIE DURKIN** *The York Dispatch*
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To say the past six years of Bambie Jordan's life have been hard would be a bit of an understatement. She's been through a bout of cancer, several surgeries and lost her job along the way.

But she has persevered, and she will graduate Wednesday from YTI Career Institute's 21-month medical assistant program.

The school's York campus has announced Jordan will receive the President's Award, which is given to the graduate who has demonstrated superior commitment, enthusiasm and leadership at the school. She has high attendance and good grades and helps raise money for local charities as a student ambassador.

But it hasn't been an easy ride.

The fight: It all started with a piece of wood.

While working one day, a piece of wood suddenly hit her breast. The impact wasn't devastating - it broke the skin, but the spot was only the size of a pencil tip, said Jordan, 49, of Windsor Township.

She said she thought it was no big deal, but she was concerned when the surrounding area stayed red.

After a few months of mammograms, ultrasounds and a stint on antibiotics, a surgeon suggested



Bambie Jordan of Windsor Township, a breast cancer survivor, is graduating from YTI Career Institute with a degree in specialized technology. (Bill Kalina photo)

a biopsy. She called a few days later and told Jordan she had inflammatory breast cancer, an aggressive cancer that is marked by red, swollen skin.

"I knew something was wrong, but I would've never dreamt that they would've told me I had breast cancer," she said.

The cancer's actual size was about the size of a piece of paper -- it covered one whole breast, which had to be surgically removed, Jordan said.

"When someone tells you you're gonna lose your breast and have nothing, it was shocking," she said.

She elected to have a double mastectomy, which was coupled with chemotherapy, radiation and a hysterectomy. She was out of work for nine months.

And when she was finally well enough to return to her job at Yorktowne Cabinetry, she said, it decided to close the Red Lion plant she and her husband worked at for 14 years.

But then her union told her she was eligible to go back to school.

Never give up: She chose her path as a medical assistant, along with other friends from work - six Yorktowne former employees were in one class.

And as she was finishing up her degree, York campus president Carla Horn called to tell her she was nominated for the President's Award.

"When she called me and told me I was nominated, I cried," Jordan said. "I just broke down and cried because, you know, when you're going through cancer, it's always like 'Why me?'"

But it was her can-do attitude and drive to help the community that earned her the award, Horn said.

"It was really her positive approach with what life had dealt her and wanting to be successful," she said. "She's a very cool lady."

In addition to Jordan's success at YTI, Horn said her role with local organizations such as the American Legion and Relay for Life really showed the school how she gives back to the community.

"She is a very compassionate person," she said.

And Jordan said giving back is her mission in life.

"God had a message for me," Jordan said. "In my eyes, he wants me to help other people and let people know there's hope out there."

And hope there is: She's already secured a part-time job with a local plastic surgeon after an externship at the practice. Although each day is a little hard to get started -- she's very tired, and her arthritis makes her joints ache -- it's a blessing in the end, she said.

"It just feels so rewarding to know that I'm finally getting back on track," Jordan said.

--Reach Mollie Durkin at mdurkin@yorkdispatch.com.

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