



**Young leaders charging to meet the high-priority needs of Palmetto Health Cancer Centers.**

## **Elizabeth and Stephen Ross**



**My introduction to cancer came early in life. Shortly after I turned six, my mom passed away at the young age of 34. She spent the majority of my life fighting for hers. Growing up without her, I couldn't help but wonder if I, too, would one day share in a similar fight. During my sophomore year of college, I became more interested in my family history, and the discovery of additional family members diagnosed with breast cancer encouraged me to investigate genetic testing. Unfortunately, I found that fear is a powerful emotion that has the ability to either paralyze or motivate, and as a college student, I was not ready to ask for the truth.**

**Flash forward eleven years...Discussions between my husband, Stephen, and me about starting our family became my driving motivation to resolve my lingering concerns about my health. In the winter of 2014, I underwent genetic testing and found that I carry a mutation to the ATM gene linked to early onset breast cancer. After much consultation and support from my Palmetto Health team, on September 16, 2015, I underwent a prophylactic double mastectomy with reconstruction later that year.**

**Because of Palmetto Health and the wonderful doctors in Columbia, I will likely never have breast cancer and will hopefully get the privilege of watching my children grow up. Stephen and I joined The Cavalry to help educate others on the powerful tool that is genetic counseling, its process and its life-saving potential. I hope to share my experiences with others in similar situations to help them discover, as I did, the empowering effects of genetic counseling. I am grateful that recent funds contributed by members of The Cavalry benefited the genetic counseling program led by the Palmetto Health-USC Medical Group.**

**[PalmettoHealthFoundation.org/TheCavalry](http://PalmettoHealthFoundation.org/TheCavalry)**