



A CONVERSATION WITH...

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

Andrea McWilliams
January 2007 Cover Woman

Austin Woman: How did you react when you were chosen to be an AW cover woman?
Andrea McWilliams: Well, I had a lot going on at that time. I had a newborn and I had just finished chemo. I was super excited when I found out because Austin Woman allowed me to come out and tell the world about me having cancer, on my own terms, so, I was excited to have the opportunity to do that. I was able to tell my story in the way we wanted to tell it and from the perspective of empowerment for other women that were going through the same thing.

AW: How did being on the cover affect your career?
AM: Definitely, being on the cover took my relationships in Austin to another level because the magazine is so well respected and such a great platform for women in business in the community. For me to be on the cover made me a part of a club that I'm proud to be a part of.

AW: What impact did being on the cover have in other areas of your life?
AM: It was interesting being on the cover because everyone realized I had cancer. It affected my life in that other people who were going through similar struggles reached out to me for support and assistance, and I view that as part of my mission.

AW: In your opinion, what makes Austin Woman stand apart from other magazines in Austin?
AM: Girl power! Just knowing when I pick up the magazine that I'm going to be inspired by other women and it's going to be presented in such a positive, powerful light is such a gift. Not only is it a gift for women my age, but it's a gift for women of all ages to know that there is a publication out there that is all about empowering women and about showing women in their strongest and most favorable environments.

AW: Austin Woman is built on a foundation of female empowerment. What does the word "empowerment" mean to you?
AM: Empowerment means that you are comfortable in your own skin, in who you are and in what direction you are headed. Being empowered means that you have the confidence to take on your day and not look back or second-guess what your direction is with your career and with your life.

AW: What message do you hope readers took away from your story?
AM: You can go through hard things and still succeed and be at the top of your game. That is why I agreed to do the Austin Woman cover. I wanted women to see that you can go through really awful, personal things in your life, but you can still succeed in life and be at the top of your industry. That is the reason I was willing to go public. I didn't have to because no one knew I had cancer, but I chose to so that women had the opportunity to be encouraged by my story.

Fifteen years and 180 issues later, *Austin Woman* isn't slowing down any time soon.

By Maddy Hill and Lauren Jones
Photos by Sarah Holcomb and Caitlin Candelari