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Local 'Design Star' shines



Courtesy of HGTV

Last night as I watched HGTV's Top Chef-like show, Design Star, I was reminded of the watching party I attended last Monday hosted by local show contestant Leslie Ezell. Set in a luxuriously appointed Preston Hollow house, the bash featured noshes and drinkies, as well as about 70 fans of Leslie's who arrived to watch the evening's episode.

I got to meet Leslie and her wife, Libby, as well as their kids, and what a sweet and bubbly group they were! Leslie, especially, was a petite powerhouse, sharing funny stories and generally making everyone feel like her best friend.

Now, if you haven't watched Design Star, the premise, again, is similar to Top Chef, or Next Food Network Star, except in this case, contestants are given an interior design challenge, with the least-liked design earning its creator the boot.

Pretty soon, it was time to sit by the telly and watch the show. I'll let the news release take it from here:

Around 75 people sat in a sprawling Preston Hollow home to see the 7th episode of season 6 kill Leslie off the popular show. In addition to an estimated 200,000 households, her guests sat in front of the TV and gasped when show host, Tanika Ray, shared the grueling words, "Leslie, we will not be producing your show" near the end of the 8pm hour. Her four children, from a blended family with wife Libby Toudouze, shared the most intense reaction of shock with the rest of the deflated crowd. Her family and house guests expected Leslie to win the episode challenge or be counted as 'safe' this week—not be kicked off the show.

Leslie however did not want to mourn the end to the 7 intense weeks of competition with 11 contestants from around the U.S. The first episode was on the heels of her last of six breast cancer surgeries which followed a two year winning battle with breast cancer — no other disappointment could shutter her resilience. So instead of crying on the couch with feelings of defeat or embarrassment Leslie flaunted the fact that she would not win Design Star's ultimate prize ... her own HGTV show.

I really very much admired how Leslie decided to go out — with a bang! Totally my style, girl 😊 And a terrific lesson not just to the guests but to her young kids as well: Life doesn't end when a major disappointment strikes, it just goes onward and upward.

To that end, Leslie then touted a cause and event dear to her heart: She's the 2011 Honorary Race Chair for the Komen Dallas Race for the Cure®!! In mere weeks, she raised \$29,000, and even tied the event to a fun and inventive public art project. Starting Sept. 17 at West Village, a giant metal bra (yes, a BRA!) created by sculptor George Tobolowsky will pop up at various Dallas locations, and with its arrival, the location will somehow, in some fashion turn pink to commemorate breast cancer awareness. Very clever! Leslie, your awesomeness knows no bounds ...

(Get thee to the [Komen Dallas Race for the Cure®](#) website to sign your butt up for the Oct. 15 run/walk event or donate to the cause of breast cancer research and awareness, or ... BOTH! Susan G. Komen for the Cure is one of my absolute favorite charity, and I've participated in the Race four times, here in Dallas and also when I lived in Detroit. It's a terrific, emotional, healing, bonding, commemorative affair, and I'm glad to be a part of it!)



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