

Beating breast cancer

We've been there. We know how you feel.

At St. Mary's, we understand the breast cancer journey. Many of us have been there, so we know what you're going through. The flood of feelings on being diagnosed. The difficult choices. The need for connection with others. The comfort of family, friends, and faith. The importance of being able to trust your doctors and nurses. For every stage of your journey, we are here for you.

- 3D mammography
- State-of-the-art diagnostics
- Dedicated breast cancer radiologists
- Breast health navigators
- Compassionate surgical services
- Cardio-oncology program to protect heart health

Susan Blalock

Susan is a collection analyst with St. Mary's Financial Services. She was diagnosed with stage 1 breast cancer at the age of 48.

"After my oldest brother passed of a heart attack, another brother wanted me to go for a full health check-up. I had not had a complete health check-up in 3 years and I was past-due for a mammogram. Thanks to St. Mary's Women's Center, the mammogram found the cancer."

After going through a period of denial, Susan opted for a double mastectomy. Today she is cancer-free.

Her faith that God has a plan, the support of family and friends, and staying positive helped her on her journey. "I learned how truly blessed and strong I am.

"Everyone is scared at first of the unknown," she says. "Even with faith, we are human. Stay positive and remember this is just a chapter in your life, not the whole story."

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

-- Eleanor Roosevelt



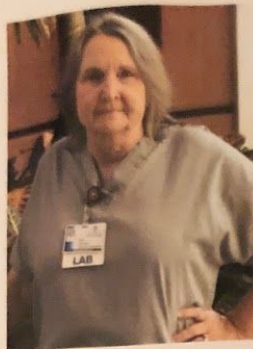
Denise Blaschke

Denise is the activities coordinator at St. Mary's Highland Hills Village. She was diagnosed with Stage 2B infiltrating ductal carcinoma in 2008 at the age of 49.

"My dog helped me discover the lump," she says. "He always laid on my chest and I was trying to push him away when I felt this lump. I recently learned that dogs can detect cancer by smell."

Denise recalls the many dates associated with her cancer journey: her diagnosis, lumpectomy, start of chemo, start of radiation therapy. "The treatment was scary at first," she admits. "I stayed positive by reading motivational quotes and finding strength with others who were also fighting cancer.

"I find myself saying that I am cancer-free. But there is always that thought in the back of your mind that cancer can recur. I think that once you have had cancer you just make sure you live every day to the fullest."



Sue Greenway

Sue is a Transcriptionist/Administrative Assistant in St. Mary's Laboratory Pathology Department. She was diagnosed in April 2013 at the age of 56 with stage 1 breast cancer.

"I felt a mass in my breast on a Sunday," she says. "I got an order from my doctor to have a mammogram and biopsy on Monday. I got my diagnosis the next morning. Although I was devastated, the love and support of my family and my lab family gave me the courage to face the challenges ahead."

Sue was treated with a mastectomy and chemotherapy. Chemo was arduous but manageable.

"What meant the most to me was that my son came to be with me. He lives all the way in Denver. My husband was always with me during chemo, so he helped keep me distracted."

Today, Sue takes Tamoxifen and sees her oncologist regularly. Her advice: "Stay strong. Believe in the people who are taking care of you."



Amber Mize

Amber is a certified medical assistant with Johnson and Murthy Family Practice. She was diagnosed with stage 1 breast cancer the week of her 40th birthday after she felt a lump.

"In my head, I knew," she says. "I don't know how I knew, but I did. It was still very shocking."

Amber chose to have bilateral mastectomy and reconstruction without chemo or radiation. She takes Tamoxifen and has been cancer-free for three years.

"I was absolutely scared of my surgery," she says. "I dealt with it by keeping myself busy. I worked up until the day before my surgery. I couldn't sit home thinking about it."

She advises: "Write down all the things that you're worrying or wondering about because you're not going to remember to ask when you go to the doctor." She also notes, "I learned to ask for help when I needed it. I'm not usually that type of person."



Chrissy Bradley

Chrissy is the administrative coordinator for St. Mary's Case Management Department. She was diagnosed with stage 1A breast cancer two weeks after her 40th birthday.

"If I had come in any later for my mammogram, I would have had a much different result; my tumor was very fast-growing," she says, noting that while she has some family history, she had tested negative for the breast cancer gene.

The diagnosis was scary. "My mother had died the year prior and there are two times when you really want to call your mom: when you find out you're pregnant and when you find out you have cancer."

Treatment involved a lumpectomy, radiation, and a five-year course of Tamoxifen. Her stepson in Army Basic Training, her husband, her 2-year-old son, and her family at work helped her stay strong. She advises, "Take it one day at a time. There will be blessings in your life despite your diagnosis."

Pamela Shaw

Pam is a scribe for Dr. David Gaines at Georgia Family Medicine. She was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer at the age of 51 after a routine screening mammogram in May 2012 detected a suspicious lesion. A follow-up diagnostic mammogram with biopsy confirmed she had cancer.

"I feel like God had prepared me," she says. "I already knew a group of breast cancer survivors and I had just started a new relationship."

Pam had a bilateral mastectomy, reconstruction and Tamoxifen but did not require chemotherapy. "My coworkers were really awesome," she says, adding "I felt like I had constant reassurance from my family and friends."

Pam urges women to remember they are not alone, adding "Mammograms are life-saving. I learned to keep going. Life happens. I was reminded that God has got it."



Kirsten Porter

Kirsten is a financial counselor and pre-registration coordinator with St. Mary's Patient Access Services. She was diagnosed with stage 0 breast cancer on Jan. 21, 2019, at the age of 36.

"I had severe pain in my right breast in October," she says. "My gynecologist ordered a mammogram at St. Mary's, but I waited until January to have it done. Then I had all the necessary procedures that detected the cancer. When I heard the news, I fell down crying. I just kept thinking about my 10-year-old daughter."

Kirsten's cancer was addressed with lumpectomy and radiation treatment, which ended on June 7. All signs are looking positive.

"I was nervous, but not afraid. My faith helped me stay strong, and I had the support of my family, friends, church, and the staff I work with. My mom is a cancer survivor. She would send me scripture every day, and I would pray and listen to Gospel music."



Cheryl Sexton

Cheryl is the administrative assistant in Patient Financial Services. She was diagnosed in March 2013 at the age of 48 with stage 3 breast cancer, which she discovered when she noticed an odd shape on her breast.

"I was shocked," she says. "You sort of go numb."

For treatment, Cheryl says, "I had it all: double mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiation. Starting chemo was especially

difficult, but the nurse and my husband kept me calm.

"It took a village to get me through this," she says. "My husband told me he was going to love me through it, and he did. He was my anchor."

Cheryl has been in remission for six years but continues to take medication to suppress the risk of another cancer. "I never realized how strong and tough I could actually be," she notes. "I learned what my priorities in life are."

Care where you are

St. Mary's provides 2D- and 3D screening mammography services at all four of our imaging locations. To schedule your mammogram, call the numbers below or visit www.stmarysathens.org. Saturday appointments available at some locations. Call today!

- St. Mary's Hospital, 1230 Baxter St., Athens. 706.389.2700
- St. Mary's Outpatient Center, 2470 Daniells Bridge Road, Athens. 706.389.2700
- St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital, 5401 Lake Oconee Parkway, Greensboro. 706.389.2700
- St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital, 367 Clear Creek Parkway, Lavonia. 706.356.7808 (online scheduling not yet available)