

BROADCAST-Mammograms Matter; Patient Declares She's Living Proof

A Western Illinois woman who hadn't had a mammogram in a dozen years says she's glad she finally got one after a reminder letter arrived in the mail three weeks ago. Donna Huizenga (pronounced high-ZING-uh) of Henderson says she found excuses not to get her annual mammogram.

SOT-Donna Huizenga, Breast Cancer Survivor

“Please, mammography does matter. They do detect cancer with mammography. I'm a living example of that.” She added, “Yeah, so I have a myriad of excuses for why I didn't have a mammogram (for five years) but I'm glad now that I did.”(:10)

Huizenga had a cancer scare 20 years ago when a mammogram detected calcifications in her left breast and she wound up having a biopsy. It turned out then, nothing was wrong.

Fast forward to late last month, Huizenga started noticing a problem with the same breast. At the same time, she received a life-saving letter from OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center in Galesburg.

SOT-Donna Huizenga, Breast Cancer Survivor

“All of a sudden in the mail, I received a letter saying, ‘Hey, you are late in getting your mammogram. You need to make an appointment.’” she recalled. “And so I did, right away. I made the appointment, had the mammogram, they discovered I had a tumor in the left breast, had a biopsy the next week and they discovered it was cancerous.”(:20)

Huizenga decided to have a single breast mastectomy even though she found the cancer early. She didn't want to worry.

So far this year, 61 mastectomies have been performed at OSF St. Mary Medical Center, up from 45 the previous year. St. Mary's Volunteer and Auxiliary Services Coordinator Shelley Willett, was surprised by the number. She learned about the increase while looking for a new project for volunteers.

Willett landed on the idea of providing mastectomy comfort kits as an optional activity for volunteers who were looking for a different challenge.

It turned out to be a win-win for volunteers and patients.

SOT-Shelly Willett, coordinator Volunteer and Auxiliary Services, OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center

“Two of them come in and they bring their sewing machines, they bring their treats. One of them has a CD player and they play music and they have a good time and they love doing this.” (:10)

Willet said money from a Mission Partner Jeans and selling a few items in the gift shop as a fundraiser is helping support the mastectomy kits. She also received a donation of porcelain crucifixes with the word ‘Courage’ from the local [Willow Tree](#) supplier.

SOT-Shelly Willett, coordinator Volunteer and Auxiliary Services, OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center

“Just for someone to have this in their hand, just to reflect, is something really special to me and I just thought that was nice,” said Willett whose mother had breast cancer. (:11)

Huizenga marveled at the great care and love that went into thinking of everything she would need, even though she didn’t realize it until after the fact.

Among her favorite items -- a uniquely-shaped pillow that she called, ‘heaven sent.’

SOT-Donna Huizenga, Breast Cancer Survivor

“It cushioned my arm against all of the stitching -- the staples. At night, it was wonderful,” she said, displaying how it fit under her arm like a purse. “One of the things I have to kind of laugh about is somebody put candy in there and let me tell you, that night in the hospital that chocolate was all gone at one sitting. So there were little things in there that I really appreciated. (:15)

But even before her surgery, Huizenga found herself using a notebook and the pink pen looped into the binder. It became her diary and the single-source for all important information.

“Things I wanted to tell family members. And, I really liked it and then after the surgery when they put the ports in, I kept a diary of my ports everyday so I could give information to the doctor when I went back.” (:14)

During cancer treatment, the care team often gives treatment into a catheter with a small port attached to it. It can be used to give chemotherapy or medicine into your vein, or to take blood. Fortunately, Huizenga did not need chemotherapy or radiation.

The 73 year-old admits she went to ‘some dark places’ immediately after her diagnosis, but now she’s optimistic and wants to share that hope with other patients at the next local support group meeting she plans to attend.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THE WEB

Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October serves as a reminder to know your risk of breast cancer because it is the first step toward early intervention for both men and women. [Schedule your yearly mammogram](#) if you are over 40 or talk with your doctor about earlier screening if you have a history of breast cancer in your family. You can also visit osfhealthcare.org/breast or click [here](#) for a free online breast cancer risk assessment.