

Script – Print – With This Ring

OSF Cancer Patient Says ‘I Do’ in Hospital Ceremony

Vicki Smith met Mike Ethridge more than 30 years ago when she was working for a tree service company through a temp agency. On the last day of her week-long assignment, Smith noticed a striking man walk into the store.

“And I thought who is that guy? He was in and out. I thought ‘he looks so good,’” said Vicki Smith, patient. “Before my day was up he came back with a red rose for me. That’s how that happened.”

Three decades later and the bloom remains fresh for this Rockford couple. They’ve had their ups and downs, like most couples, but they’ve always supported each other through good times and bad. Especially when Smith was diagnosed with cancer eight years ago. She fought through and won the battle. But recently, Smith got some upsetting news about her health.

“Just a couple of months ago it hit me again, stage four in the bone,” said Vicki Smith, patient. “But that’s ok. God is good. We’re going to fight it and stay positive. The doctors and everyone here are just wonderful. I couldn’t ask for better.”

Facing yet another difficult challenge, the couple decided it was the time to get married. Recently hospitalized, Smith wanted to get married at the Patricia D. Pepe Center for Cancer Care at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center in front of OSF Mission Partners (employees), many whom she considers family.

The OSF team got busy. They created decorations, made a cake and even had sparkling grape juice on hand. On March 2, Smith was wheeled into the infusion area of the cancer center by hospital staff with “Here Comes the Bride” playing on a Mission Partner’s cellphone. The brief ceremony was conducted by a hospital chaplain.

“I can’t even describe it. I didn’t expect anything like this,” said Vicki Smith, patient. “I’m so thrilled. I’m so tickled. I’m so happy.”

Smith wasn’t the only one thrilled with her special day. So were the Mission Partners from the cancer center and other hospital staff who made this day possible.

“It was an opportunity to do something nice for someone who has gone through a lot, who is a really sweet individual, a very caring individual,” said Dr. Iftexhar Ahmad, director of Oncology Services, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. “We’ve all gotten very close with her over the years.”