

## Ovarian Cancer survivor spreads awareness, encouragement

### TV PKG

#### INTRO:

A CANCER DIAGNOSIS CAN BE ONE OF THE TOUGHEST THINGS TO HEAR. THAT WAS THE REALITY FOR SAVANNA CHRISTENSEN – WHO WAS ONLY 22 YEARS OLD WHEN SHE HEARD THOSE WORDS FOR THE FIRST TIME. NOW – SHE’S HOPING TO SPREAD AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS. OSF HEALTHCARE’S MATT SHEEHAN SHARES HER STORY.

**TAKE PKG <((** “During cancer, you have that mindset of ‘am I going to be able to achieve the things that I want? Am I still going to have that future I dreamt of?’”

THESE QUESTIONS FLOODED THE MIND OF SAVANNA CHRISTENSEN IN JUNE 2020 – WHEN SHE RECEIVED HER FIRST OVARIAN CANCER DIAGNOSIS AT THE AGE OF 22.

“I was bloated. That was my first symptom that really irked me. It looked like a pregnant belly.”

IN ADDITION TO THE BLOATING... SAVANNA EXPERIENCED SHARP PAINS IN HER RIGHT SIDE AND ALSO LOST HER APPETITE. SHE TRUSTED HER GUT AND WENT TO SEE AN ONCOLOGIST AT OSF HEALTHCARE WHO EVENTUALLY DETERMINED SAVANNA HAD OVARIAN CANCER. SHE HAD SURGERY IN JULY 2020.

“I woke up from surgery frantically asking the nurse, ‘did they save my ovary? Did they save anything?’ She said ‘yes, they only took your right ovary and your fallopian tube.’ I passed out after she told me that.”

LIFE WENT ON FOR SAVANNA. SHE GOT ENGAGED – STARTED WORKING – AND WAS READY TO START PLANNING FOR A FAMILY. THAT’S WHEN SHE RECEIVED THE DEVASTATING NEWS... FOR THE SECOND TIME IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS... HER CANCER WAS BACK.

WITH SURGERY SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 2022 – SAVANNA WAS HEARTBROKEN... ANGRY... AND CONFUSED. BEFORE UNDERGOING SURGERY FOR A SECOND TIME... CHRISTENSEN’S ONCOLOGIST TALKED TO HER ABOUT AN ALTERNATIVE... CHEMOTHERAPY. UNDER THE CARE OF DR. MICHELLE ROWLAND... A GYNECOLOGICAL ONCOLOGIST WITH OSF HEALTHCARE DR. ROWLAND SAYS SAVANNA HAS A FIGHTERS’S SPIRIT.

“It’s very rewarding to have worked with somebody through a cancer diagnosis and treatment, which was not an easy treatment for her. But to really see her get back to her life.”

DR. ROWLAND SAYS THE UNFORTUNATE TRUTH ABOUT OVARIAN CANCER... AS SAVANNA FOUND... IS THAT IT CAN BE REOCCURRING.

“Most of the time when we diagnose it, it can be relatively advanced. We have good luck treating it, but it tends to be a cancer that recurs or that somebody will have come back at some point in their lifetime.”

DR. ROWLAND SAYS THE SYMPTOMS SAVANNA HAD WHEN SHE WAS FIRST DIAGNOSED ARE COMMON SIGNS OF OVARIAN CANCER.

“A lot of reflux happens sometimes. I’ll see people have that because that bowel is not working as it should. It may be that I eat a few bites of food, but I feel incredibly full. That’s not normal, that’s something we’d want to check out.”

EACH REGIMEN OF CHEMO WAS THREE WEEKS AT A TIME AND SAVANNA SAYS SHE WAS LUCKY TO HAVE AN INCREDIBLE SUPPORT SYSTEM SURROUNDING HER— INCLUDING HER CARE TEAM AT OSF SAINT FRANCIS MEDICAL CENTER. AFTER 3 MONTHS – SAVANNA FINALLY RECEIVED SOME GOOD NEWS – THE TUMOR WAS GONE.

HER LAST DAY OF CHEMO WAS APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup>... 2022. FAST FORWARD TO TODAY – SAVANNA IS MARRIED TO THE LOVE OF HER LIFE – SHAWN. SHE NOW IS PASSIONATE ABOUT SPREADING AWARENESS ABOUT OVARIAN CANCER – WHICH GETS EXTRA ATTENTION IN SEPTEMBER – OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH. SAVANNA HAS WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OTHER OVARIAN CANCER PATIENTS.

“This is the hardest fight you might ever take on. You are literally fighting for your life, and you deserve to be celebrated. You are a warrior, you’re a fighter! Just make sure you take it easy on yourself. Take all the steps you need to, whether fast or slow, but just remember to give yourself some credit because this is hard. It’s physically and mentally draining.”

WITH OSF HEALTHCARE – I’M MATT SHEEHAN. ))>

## **ANCHOR TAG**

THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY SAYS JUST OVER 19-THOUSAND 7-HUNDRED WOMEN WILL RECEIVE A NEW DIAGNOSIS OF OVARIAN CANCER IN 2023. OVARIAN CANCER RANKS FIFTH IN CANCER DEATHS AMONG WOMEN... BUT IT IS RELATIVELY RARE. THE A-C-S REPORTS ABOUT 1 IN 78 WOMEN GET OVARIAN CANCER IN THEIR LIFETIME. HALF OF THE WOMEN WHO ARE DIAGNOSED ARE 63 YEARS OR OLDER... SO IT WAS EXTREMELY RARE FOR SAVANNA TO BE DIAGNOSED AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE.

OSF SAINT FRANCIS MEDICAL CENTER TREATS MORE THAN 2-THOUSAND NEWLY DIAGNOSED CANCER PATIENTS EACH YEAR. IN JANUARY 2024 THE OSF HEALTHCARE CANCER INSTITUTE IS EXPECTED TO OPEN... OFFERING WORLD-CLASS CANCER CARE TO PATIENTS AROUND THE REGION.