Mammogram Catches Cancer Early

The time after a cancer diagnosis can be frightening and filled with uncertainty. Keeping positive and having hope can be difficult, but when Anna Rodriguez, 51, of Shrewsbury was faced with a breast cancer diagnosis in January 2011, she was determined not to let it get her down.

Knowing the importance of mammography, Anna always kept her appointments with the Women’s Center at Riverview Medical Center.

At an appointment in early 2011, Leny Rada-Banat, M.D., a fellowship-trained breast imager at the Center and part of Meridian Cancer Care, read Anna’s films and identified a subtle change compared to prior mammograms. After a diagnostic workup and breast biopsy, a breast cancer diagnosis was made.

“I have a lot of faith, so while I was nervous about my diagnosis, I also knew it wasn’t a death sentence,” Anna says. “I knew I was going to be in good hands with the physicians and staff at Riverview and was confident everything was going to be OK.”

Next, Anna met with Philippa Woodriffe, M.D., a surgeon on staff at Riverview, to discuss her treatment options. Because her cancer was found at an early stage, Anna was a candidate for a lumpectomy followed by radiation therapy.

According to Dr. Woodriffe, a lumpectomy is often the preferred treatment option for women with early stages of breast cancer. “A lumpectomy allows the surgeon to remove the cancer while still maintaining the appearance of the breast. It is minimally invasive; only a small section of tissue is removed,” Dr. Woodriffe says. “Radiation therapy is sometimes paired with a lumpectomy to get rid of any remaining cancer cells following the procedure, and to lower the chance of the cancer returning.”

In March, Anna began her treatments. During her recovery period, Anna never lost her faith in her recovery. “I like to walk a lot, and since I live so close to the hospital, when the weather was nice I walked to my appointments,” Anna says. “Walking helped me overcome my fear and reminded me that my faith was going to help me through it.”

After Anna completed her treatment, she faithfully adhered to the recommended six-month follow-up mammogram appointments. Dr. Rada-Banat has closely monitored her test results for two years and today, Anna remains healthy.

Anna continues to champion the importance of annual mammography, encouraging all women to make sure they schedule their appointments. “A mammogram is really important to see everything that is happening. If cancer is detected early, you get treated early,” Anna says. “I am lucky to have Riverview and Dr. Rada-Banat so close to my home, because I know I will be treated kindly and will be in the best hands. Dr. Rada-Banat has been a blessing.”

Anna Rodriguez shares her story and the importance of mammograms every chance she can. She also loves to cook, especially Salvadoran foods.

You’re Important

Women in Monmouth County have access to complete health care at the Women’s Centers of Riverview Medical Center and Bayshore Community Hospital. Led by Bokran Won, M.D., both centers offer fully digital mammography under the direction of a team of fellowship-trained breast radiologists. Learn more about the experiences our Centers have to offer at BayshoreHospital.org/WomensCenter or RiverviewMedicalCenter.com/WomensCenter.
I’m Important

Anna isn’t the only woman who makes time for her annual mammogram. Just ask Camille Castiello, 50, of Hazlet.

A New York native, Camille moved to Hazlet 14 years ago, and has turned to Bayshore Community Hospital for her and her family’s health needs — from colonoscopies, to a variety of diagnostic tests, to the occasional emergency department visit. So when it came time for Camille to begin having mammograms, it was only natural to turn to the Women’s Center at Bayshore.

“I like how the Women’s Center team makes it so easy,” Camille says. “All the years I have been going there everyone has been so nice and efficient. They make it almost effortless.”

In March 2010, Camille scheduled her screening, and her appointment went as usual. That night when she got home, however, she received a call from the Women’s Center asking her to come back for an ultrasound-guided biopsy to follow up on a suspicious lump identified in the mammogram. “I was surprised by how quickly everything happened. The next day I was back at the Center for the procedure,” Camille says. “I was a little scared, but the team once again came to my side with compassion and kindness. The technologist held my hand through the whole thing.”

According to Bokran Won, M.D., medical director of both the Women’s Center at Riverview and Bayshore, in the case of an abnormal finding in a patient’s mammogram or breast ultrasound, they are called back for a needle biopsy examination to determine if the abnormality is breast cancer.

“This is often a very anxious time for the patient,” Dr. Won says. “The entire team at the Women’s Center works to allay the patient’s stress by providing a comfortable and empathetic environment while maintaining the highest degree of medical professionalism.” After two of Camille’s mammograms came back normal, she was soon cleared to return to annual testing.

“I was very lucky my issue turned out to be nothing,” Camille says. “But for some women their results do come back cancerous. Annual mammography is so important not just physically, but to reassure yourself mentally that everything is good, and I would recommend the Women’s Center at Bayshore to any woman.”

– Caitlin Coyle

Little Things.

When faced with a cancer diagnosis, or any life-changing event, it is often the “little things” that we treasure. A cup of coffee with a best friend, a spontaneous hug from your child, a walk on a sunny day, or side-splitting laughter, are all little things that mean a lot.

A mammogram may seem like a little thing, but it can be a life-saver. It was for Giuliana Rancic. Which is why she has been a tireless advocate for annual mammography and supports the mission of Paint the Town Pink.

Join us as Giuliana and Bill share how a mammogram forever changed their lives, opened them up to a new future of amazing moments—including the joy of welcoming their son—and created a future of many little things to treasure. Call 1-855-PINK411 or visit PaintTheTownPink.com to learn more about Paint the Town Pink.

May 4, 2013
Visit PaintTheTownPink.com for Event Details

Little Things.