

Routine screening allowed early detection for woman with known breast cancer risk factors

Maggie Watkins has had annual mammograms for more than 20 years. She knew it was necessary for her to be very diligent about screenings because her mother and mother's sister both had breast cancer, but Maggie never had an abnormal result until this past June.

"I went for my routine mammogram on May 7," Watkins said. "It showed some changes from last year, so they brought me back about 10 days later for a follow up. That screening showed some abnormal spots, but they looked like just calcifications. A breast biopsy was scheduled for June 6 just to make sure."

Watkins had a trip planned to attend a nursing conference May 17-23 as part of a recent honor she had received at work, the Parkwest Clinical Excellence Award for the Endoscopy Department. Because the spots didn't look like cancerous

tumors on the mammogram, she was permitted to travel, so she did.

On June 7, the day after the biopsy, Watkins got the dreaded news: she had cancer. Since that time, her life has become a whirlwind of genetic testing, various scans and chemotherapy.

Despite it all, Maggie has a positive outlook.

"Everyone at Parkwest has been so supportive," said Maggie. "My manager allows me to work around my treatments and my co-workers have organized the walk team and even made me cute scarves to wear since I've lost my hair. I couldn't ask for a better group of people. It's made my journey so much easier."

"The way I look at it, the sicker I feel now, the more the medicines are working to kill the cancer," she said.

To celebrate the completion of chemotherapy, she and several co-workers from Parkwest are



Maggie Watkins (front center) says she couldn't make it without her co-workers in the Endoscopy Lab at Parkwest Medical Center

Maggie showing off her positive outlook while on-shift at Parkwest.



participating as "Team Maggie" in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure on Oct. 27.

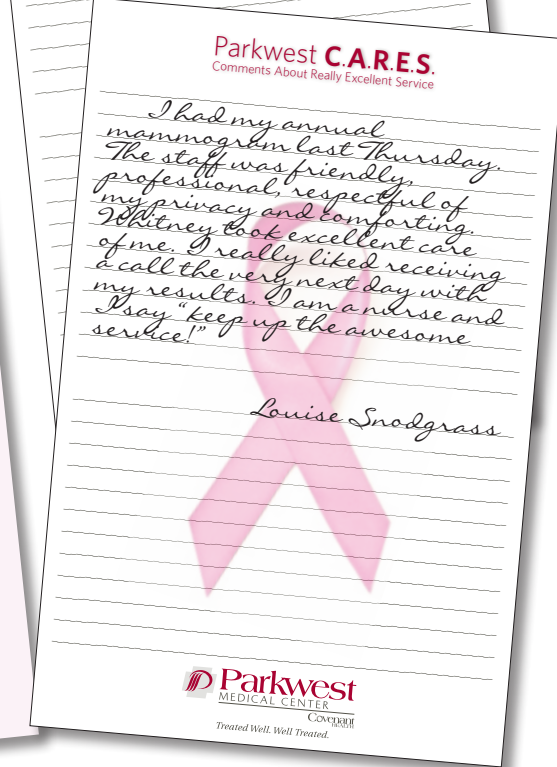
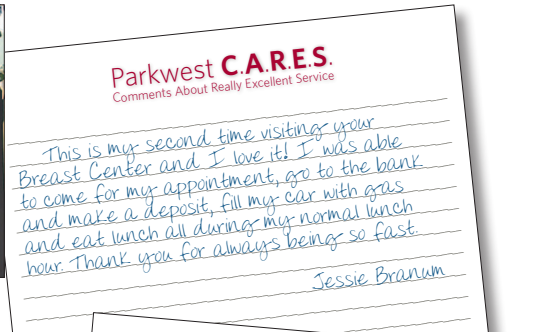
What comes after that, she's not quite sure. Watkins will meet with her oncologist, Dr. Daniel Ibach, and her surgeon, Dr. Heath Many, to discuss the best plan for getting her back to a normal life.

Watkins' MRI on Sept. 12 showed no cancer cells remaining.

"I am a survivor due to a lot of prayers and God's grace," said Watkins. "I hope my story assures others that miracles do happen with prayers and faith."



Jessie Branum



Parkwest Comprehensive Breast Center is ACR Accredited

What does this mean to you?

The Parkwest Comprehensive Breast Center provides a single-setting for medical expertise, education, individualized treatment planning, and ongoing support for breast healthcare. The center is an accredited American College of Radiology Breast Center of Excellence. As a patient this accreditation means:

- Parkwest Comprehensive Breast Center has voluntarily undergone a rigorous review process to ensure its services meet nationally accepted standards.
- Personnel have the education and certification to perform and interpret



medical images.

- Parkwest has demonstrated excellence in breast imaging by obtaining accreditation in mammography, stereotactic breast biopsy, breast ultrasound and ultrasound-guided breast biopsy.

Just the (breast cancer) facts, ma'am

What is breast cancer? Breast cancer forms in the cells of the breasts. Of the numerous types of breast cancer, ductal carcinoma (cancer that begins in the milk ducts) is the most common. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer diagnosed in America, affecting 1 in 3 women. Only skin cancer is more prevalent. Women are more likely to have breast cancer, but men can get it, too.

What are the signs and symptoms? When the cancer tumor is small and most treatable, there are typically no symptoms. That's why it is important for women to follow recommended screening guidelines, such as monthly breast self-exams and an annual mammogram. Signs and symptoms of advancing breast cancer may include:

- A breast lump or thickening that feels different from the surrounding tissue
- Bloody discharge from the nipple
- Change in the size or shape of a breast
- Changes to the skin over the breast, such as dimpling, redness or pitting (like the skin of an orange)
- Inverted nipple
- Peeling, scaling or flaking of the nipple or breast skin

When should I see my doctor? See your doctor if you find a lump or any other change in your breast – even if you've just had a mammogram with normal results.

What are the risk factors? Breast

cancer risk factors include:

- **Being female.**
- **Increasing age.** Women older than 55 have a greater risk.
- **A personal history.** If you've had breast cancer in one breast, you have an increased risk of developing cancer in the other breast.
- **A family history.** If you have a mother, sister or daughter with breast cancer, you have a greater chance of being diagnosed.
- **Inherited genes.** The most common gene mutations are referred to as BRCA1 and BRCA2. These genes can greatly increase your risk of breast cancer



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and other cancers, but they don't make cancer inevitable.

■ **Radiation exposure.** If you received radiation treatments to your chest as a child or young adult, you're more likely to develop breast cancer later in life.

- **Obesity.**
- **Beginning your period before age 12.**
- **Beginning menopause after age 55.**
- **Having your first child after age 35.**
- **Postmenopausal hormone therapy.** (Medications that combine estrogen and progesterone)
- **Drinking alcohol.** Experts recommend no more than one alcoholic beverage a day for women.



"I've Lost My Hair, Not My Hope"
Another Reason People Prefer Parkwest

The Parkwest Comprehensive Breast Center is recognized as a Breast Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology. The Center offers screenings, breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and counseling. For more information, click here or call 374-PARK.