

At the age of 48, Bettina was diagnosed with stage two breast cancer in December, making Christmas 2013 one she'll never forget.

"I was not going to get a mammogram until I was 50 because my family had no history of breast cancer," explained Bettina.

But when Bettina's mom was diagnosed with breast cancer earlier in 2013, Dr. Tony Stone, Bettina's family doctor for 30 years and Chief of Staff at Lakeridge Health, sent her for a mammogram because of the change in family history. Following the screening mammogram, Bettina received the life-altering news and her own cancer journey began.

"After my diagnosis, I had surgery at the Bowmanville Hospital, then chemotherapy, radiation, and follow-up scans at the Durham Region Cancer Centre (DRCC)," said Bettina. "My cancer couldn't be felt through a self-examination; I had no symptoms that I or Dr. Stone could recognize. Without the screening mammogram, we wouldn't have known about the cancer and it could have continued to grow or spread."

A screening mammogram takes an x-ray of the breasts and can detect cancers when they are small, less likely to have spread, and more likely to be treated successfully.



"The mammogram took 10 minutes, it's really quick," explained Bettina. "The technologists are so caring and walk you through every step. Cancer screening is so important. The longer you leave it, the more difficult it is to treat."

With breast cancer, there's a higher success rate for treatment if it's caught early. In Ontario, one in nine women will have breast cancer in their lifetime.

Bettina shared that "this year is my trifecta of screenings. I'm due for colon, cervical, and breast cancer screening. The mammogram saved my life and all cancer screening is so important to catch any issues early and give everyone the best chance for a successful recovery."

Bettina is now close to completing her adjuvant therapy and being cancer-free. "We're really lucky to have the DRCC right here in our community – it's top notch," said Bettina. "I didn't have to go into Toronto for treatment. We have an incredible team at the DRCC and I feel I had the best care possible. For that I'm very grateful".

"Kudos to Bettina for being proactive about her own health," said Dr. Stone. "By getting a screening mammogram after her family history changed, the team was able to diagnose at an early stage and begin treatment. I would urge everybody to stay on top of their own health and get things checked out when there's a change in family history."

When asked how her cancer has changed her perspective on life, Bettina explains, "My family has always been my everything and spending time together never gets taken for granted. Every day I

practice gratitude and make a point of appreciating the little things more. Life is wonderful and each day is a gift and I'm happy to share that my mom is also cancer-free".

Bettina also joined the Patient and Family Experience Advisory Council (PFEAC) for the DRCC in 2015. The DRCC PFEAC are Lakeridge Health patients or family members of patients who share their perspectives and insights about programs and practices that affect patient care and services.

"I asked my oncologist Dr. Rama Koneru, how I could give back and she suggested I join the PFEAC," explained Bettina. "Being an Advisor has been a humbling and rewarding experience. Getting a glimpse 'behind the scenes' of our cancer centre and witnessing the dedication and commitment shown by all the DRCC team members is remarkable.

Women 50 or older should have a screening mammogram every two years. Call 1-800-668-9304 to book an appointment – you do not need a referral. If you have a personal or family history of cancer, talk to your health-care provider about starting screening sooner.