

## Intuition Proves Correct in Breast Cancer Diagnosis



With a family history of all types of cancer, Deborah Bottomley has taken many precautions with her health over the years, including obtaining annual screening mammograms. Two years ago, Bottomley's annual mammogram detected a benign growth which was

removed without incident. Prior to her most recent screening, Bottomley turned to her husband, Scott, and said, "I don't have a good feeling about today." Her feelings of trepidation increased as she waited for the results from her mammogram and a subsequent biopsy. When she received the news that she had breast cancer, Bottomley was not surprised, "Cancer was always in the back of my mind, so I was just matter-of-fact about the whole thing at the time. It was only later that I said to myself, 'this is really happening!'"

Breast cancer is often a silent disease, with virtually no symptoms, but it is often completely curable if diagnosed in its early stages. In 1980, the national five-year survival rate for women diagnosed with early stage breast cancer was about 74%; today that number is 99%. There are currently more than 3.1 million breast cancer survivors in the United States. One out of eight women will develop breast cancer, yet about 85% of these women have no family history of the disease.

According to the New Jersey Department of Health, breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed among New Jersey women and the second leading cause of death, after lung cancer, attributed to cancer in the state. In 2014, 7,488 New Jersey women were diagnosed with breast cancer. The rate at which new cases of breast cancer are being diagnosed in Sussex County, as well as in the rest of the state, is stable, according to the National Cancer Institute and the Centers for Disease Control. The county's breast cancer death rate is also falling, in accordance with state and national trends. However, the disease contributes to the death of 1,300 New Jersey women annually. Access to breast cancer screenings and optimal treatments is an urgent public health issue.

Bottomley moved quickly through surgery and follow-up procedures. Because she had been so proactive about receiving annual screening mammograms, her breast cancer was caught at a very early stage allowing

Bottomley to skip chemotherapy and move right on to radiation treatments.

A working law enforcement professional, Bottomley made a concerted effort to be upbeat and transparent about the situation with her family and colleagues. She kept her adult children informed of her progress, and her husband was beside her every step of the way. "My husband was there for every single thing. He was amazing." Although the radiation treatments caused her to feel fatigued, Bottomley did not take any time off from her job. She is grateful for the support of her colleagues. "I remained positive through the whole thing. I still went to work. I told myself that I did not have time for this nonsense! It was not part of my plan," she laughs.

Having cancer has made Bottomley appreciate the impact her life has had on her family and friends. "You don't realize how a cancer diagnosis impacts your loved ones. It makes you more aware of the little things that are truly important. I used to worry about so many things. I can't believe I wasted so much energy on them."

Not surprisingly, Bottomley recommends screening mammograms. "You have to take care of yourself and your girls! There are so many programs out there which can help you. There is no reason not to go."

### Free Breast Health Services Available

The New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJ CEED) Program, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the State of New Jersey, provides funding to all twenty-one counties in the State for comprehensive breast, cervical, prostate, and colorectal cancer education, outreach, and screening. Men and women whose income is under 250% of the Federal poverty level and have no insurance are eligible for the program. Free mammograms and pap tests are also available through the NJ CEED program; follow-up diagnostics, including additional mammography views, breast ultrasounds, and biopsies can also be provided. Interested participants are encouraged to call 973-579-0570, extension 1246 or 1248. In addition, Newton Medical Center will provide a free mammogram for women who qualify through the Newton Medical Center Foundation's "Mammograms Save Lives" program. Those without health insurance are encouraged to contact Newton Medical Center's Education/Outreach office at 973-579-8340 for more information.

