

SPOTLIGHT

Coping Together, Healing Together

Shortly after moving to the Central Florida area in May of 2013, Rosalba “Rose” Valencia was just starting to enjoy retirement when she was suddenly stricken with underarm pain. Her doctor suggested she get a mammogram, and to Rose’s astonishment she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I attend to get my mind off cancer and also to get my mind off the side effects and pain. It really helps.”

10



Wish you all the way

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

THE MISSION OF THE CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY IS TO ENSURE THAT ALL PEOPLE IMPACTED BY CANCER ARE EMPOWERED BY KNOWLEDGE, STRENGTHENED BY ACTION, AND SUSTAINED BY THE COMMUNITY.

Support and Networking Groups • Healthy Lifestyle • Education
Social Connections • Resources and Referrals

“I’d just had a full physical in North Carolina before leaving my job and was told I was healthy. I’d always exercised and eaten healthy, so this diagnosis was a surprise to me.”

Rose lived by herself and didn’t have many friends in the area. Feeling anxious and alone, she knew she’d have to look elsewhere for support. By early 2014, the Cancer Support Community (CSC) at Orlando Health was just getting off the ground.

Backed by its mission to ensure all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action and sustained by community, the CSC offers educational, social and emotional support to patients and their loved ones at any stage of the patient’s cancer journey.

Since Rose was already spending so much time at the UF Health Cancer Center – Orlando Health for oncology, surgery and chemo appointments, she was eager to see what the CSC was all about. What Rose discovered was a warm, welcoming community that provided her an opportunity to take control of her health and to connect with fellow patients — at no cost.

“I like to be optimistic and have a good attitude, but sometimes it’s hard. I attend to get my mind off cancer and also to get my mind off the side effects and pain. It really helps.”

Throughout her cancer journey, Rose has experienced some setbacks. The chemo affected her heart, which raised her anxiety. Rose now attends the relaxation program, where she’s learning evidence-based interventions to help lower her anxiety and empower her with new tools to cope with stress. She is especially fond of the therapeutic arts portion of the program, which gives her the chance to paint and to sing in the choir. She also takes advantage

of the nutritional education programs. Whether it’s finding a support and networking group, someone to share the journey with, or answers to cancer questions, the CSC is for all people impacted by cancer.

Rose has entered the last phase of her cancer treatment. Despite still suffering side effects, she is taking advantage of all the CSC has to offer and even serves as a CSC volunteer. Every Friday, she hands out refreshments in the chemo room and chats with cancer patients from all over the Central Florida community. She spreads the word about the CSC to everyone she encounters — especially patients and their families — because she believes the program truly helps her and will have a positive impact on others.

“My level of depression was bad. But as I felt a bit better, I became more and more involved in the program. As a volunteer, if I can talk to just one person and say something encouraging, it can make my day.”

Since its launch, the CSC has developed even more programs in order to meet our community’s needs. Throughout its progression, Rose says the CSC continues to do what it does best — help cancer patients realize that no one is in this battle alone.

11