

Meeting the Needs of Cancer Patients in our Community

An average of 1,460 people are diagnosed with cancer in San Luis Obispo County each year. Of these, 230 are diagnosed with breast cancer. Last year, thanks to contributions to the Women's Cancer Fund, Arroyo Grande Community Hospital (AGCH) was able to increase its diagnostic capabilities with the purchase of a new 3D Mammography machine.

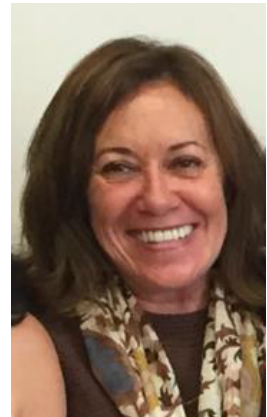
The SenoClaire 3D Mammography machine, which is housed at the Coastal Diagnostic Center, requires a similar patient process to that of the regular 2D machine, but it takes a larger quantity of x-ray images and combines them to create a 3D image. This allows it to detect more than the regular machine can, with greater accuracy in size, shape, and location of any breast irregularities.

3D Mammography, also known as Breast Tomosynthesis, has already helped save the lives of local women. When Patsy Phelan was approaching the time for her yearly mammogram, she heard that AGCH was purchasing the new machine and that it was almost ready, so she decided to wait for the new technology.

Patsy's 3D mammogram showed a 4-millimeter lump that multiple doctors were unable to feel, and that a regular 2D scan did not reveal. After a needle biopsy, the results came in. The lump was cancerous, but luckily, it was still small enough not to require chemotherapy and radiation. Patsy received a double mastectomy at AGCH, and now her only requirement is to take an estrogen-blocking pill every night to keep the cancer away.

"Without the 3D scanner, they probably wouldn't have found it until next year when it was bigger, and I would have had to go through chemo and radiation. I thank God for the 3D scanner because they would not have seen it otherwise," said Patsy. "Having two daughters and five granddaughters that live in this community, I am so glad that this advanced technology is available for us."

After a few extremely difficult weeks, Patsy healed and was able to return to life as usual. Looking back at her experience, she said about her caregivers, "They were all wonderful; I got the best care ever. I'm so grateful to them, and to everyone who contributed to the Women's Cancer Fund, which made it possible for Arroyo Grande Community Hospital to get this new 3D Mammography machine."



In addition to this wonderful new technology, the Cancer Care Fund at AGCH provides direct support to local cancer patients through gas gift cards to help them attend their many doctors' appointments, grocery gift cards to help them purchase healthy food and supplements while undergoing treatment and recovery, and a free weekly cancer support group. The Nurse Navigator, who serves as a critical source of support for each cancer patient from the point of diagnosis throughout treatments and follow-up care, fielded over 1,500 requests for assistance in 2016. Research studies have shown that reduced anxiety allows the body to better respond to cancer treatments, and that when patients feel supported physically and emotionally as well as clinically, treatment outcomes are better. Support from generous

community members continues to ensure that the needs of our local cancer patients are met through the Cancer Care Fund, and that each patient has the best chance possible of a healthy recovery.