



Say Hello To Heather

Persevering Through Adversity

We all deal with loss – it’s a natural part of life. Sometimes, though, what we lose is a part of ourselves and then we must work to recover our identity on the long road to healing and wholeness.

Heather Duke’s road to recovery is one that is sure to inspire anyone who believes that a bad situation can lead to new beginnings. Newly divorced, on limited income, and building a fresh life for herself and her 12-year-old son, Heather visited the Arthur Nagel Community Clinic for a routine Well Woman exam in the fall of last year.

She had been troubled by a constant itch in one spot on her right breast. Thinking it was likely caused by a wire in her bra, she wasn’t too concerned. But in a meeting with the Clinic’s Dr. Sandra Haldeman where she recalled a history of breast cancer in her family, Heather decided to mention the spot.

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Startling News: Dr. Haldeman quickly sent Heather to the STRIC Imaging Center in Boerne for an ultrasound and a mammogram. It became clear that Heather had an encapsulated tumor. Within five minutes of receiving the ultrasound, she was told that she had triple-negative breast cancer. “It was like the floor dropped,” Heather recalled. “Triple-negative is not treatable with most common therapies. I knew this was going to be a very tough battle.”

The hard decisions – and the reality that everything was going to change – began in that moment. She realized that her health could be in serious danger and, for the sake of her son, she was going to have to find a way through this.

Compassionate Care: Heather found her inspiration in the encouragement she received from the staff of the Nagel Clinic as an ongoing patient. “These caring professionals were all in my corner and cheering me on through all the treatments I received. If they had not recognized the urgency of my case right away, my journey could have been very different. I am so grateful for the Clinic and the level of care I found there.”

Today, Heather is back at work and watching her son learn and grow in school. “I’m beginning to finally feel like I’m closer to who I was a couple of years ago,” she says. “The Nagel Clinic has helped me reclaim my life. I felt like I was listened to and understood. And I think it made all the difference in the outcome.”

Heather’s cancer was one of six cancers uncovered for patients at the Nagel Clinic last year. Your contributions make possible these life-saving discoveries and their treatments for nearly 600 Bandera County residents and their family members annually. Thank you.