

Karen Stump  
Melanoma

In May of 2006, I felt a lump under my skin on my left cheek. My primary physician felt it was a cyst and sent me to a plastic surgeon to have it removed. The plastic surgeon agreed it was a cyst - but it was so deep, he had trouble removing it. Test results confirmed the cyst was stage 4 melanoma. I wasn't too familiar with melanoma, but after reading the pamphlet in the doctor's office - which called it fatal - I was really scared.

He suggested I go to Goshen Cancer Center and meet with Doug Schwartzentruber, M.D. Dr. Schwartzentruber is excellent. He performed additional surgery on my face to remove any remaining cancer cells. He cut from the inner corner of my eye past my lip, and removed a small part of my lip. He also cut inside from my nose to the end of my gums. I then had radiation to ensure all cells were gone.

One year later, a spot the doctors were monitoring under my left eye began growing and tracking on a nerve to my brain. Dr. Schwartzentruber suggested Interleukin-2 (IL-2) which is an immunotherapy treatment. I went into the hospital for six weeks of treatment from May through October. The tumor had shrunk. In November, my husband and I were on vacation and I began to have double vision. The cancer had spread and was tracking on my optic nerve back to my brain. I had radiation in December - Tomotherapy. That was my last treatment. It effectively shrunk the tumor and it has remained stable. I feel I have received excellent care at Goshen Cancer Center. They treat the whole person.

Cancer is life changing. I've learned that it is important to not only eat properly, exercise, and take care of my body, but also my mind by meditating, doing yoga, and staying positive.

There have been so many people that have impacted my life since being diagnosed. My husband and family have been wonderful. Also, I couldn't have gotten through this without my friends, especially a couple who are also cancer survivors.

I have learned to appreciate every day and to try not to "sweat" the small stuff! I have grown in my faith and love to help others going through their cancer journey.

I feel it's extremely important to have a positive attitude and have HOPE! Also, please have any suspicious lumps or moles checked and wear sunscreen!!!