

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

For more information, contact: *Jessica Davies*, 308-487-3600, X101 or 866-701-7173

Rural Hemingford Breast Cancer Survivor Urges You to Get Screened

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is the second most common kind of cancer in women. About 1 in 8 women born today in the United States will get breast cancer at some point. The good news is that many women can survive breast cancer if it's found and treated early.

Krista Gomez of rural Hemingford was concerned about a lump in her breast and went for her annual women's checkup. They immediately sent her for a mammogram and stayed late into the evening to undergo a biopsy.

"It was all kind of a whirlwind," Gomez explained. "The doctors and nurses were thorough with the necessary screenings and tests, it was just a few short days later I learned I had breast cancer. I was only 36," she added.

She had never had a mammogram because she was under the standard screening guidelines for her age. Gomez's girls were 9, 5, and 15 months at the time of her diagnosis. Cancer runs in her family and her aunt had been diagnosed with breast cancer just a year previous.

"I cried for days at first diagnosis because I didn't know how to handle it," she said. "I am fortunate and grateful for wonderful family support from my husband and children, parents, and brother during that time and throughout my treatment. The local health care system was wonderful with staff support, they were constantly doing things so I didn't feel alone."

Gomez decided to undergo a full mastectomy and they had her do four rounds of chemotherapy as a precautionary measure.

"Trust your intuition, if you feel like something isn't right, get it checked and keep pushing until you get the answers you need."

Now in 2016, she's excited to be cancer-free and only having to get annual checkups to monitor levels in her blood.

"Not a lot gets me down now," Gomez concluded. "It's important to take the needed time for yourself and encourage anyone dealing with cancer to be sure to do so."

As with Gomez's story, finding breast cancer early makes it easier to treat. Here's what you can do:

- Know how your breasts normally look and feel.
- Talk to your doctor right away if you notice changes in your breast.
- Talk to your doctor if you have a higher risk, including a family history of cancer.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) you can help lower your risk of breast cancer in the following ways:

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly (at least four hours a week).
- Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks to no more than one per day. Avoid exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer (carcinogens).
- Try to reduce your exposure to radiation during medical tests like mammograms, X-rays, CT scans, and PET scans.
- If you are taking, or have been told to take, hormone replacement therapy or oral contraceptives (birth control pills), ask your doctor about the risks and find out if it is right for you.
- Breastfeed your babies, if possible.

To request further information on breast cancer, please visit www.pphd.org or call 308-487-3600 or toll free 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.