

Sharon Kilpatrick

“My name is Sharon Kilpatrick and I am a breast cancer survivor and a 2016 Face of Breast Cancer for Guilford County through Susan G. Komen Northwest NC. The year 2014 was just like any other year. I scheduled my mammogram as I had previous years. However, that year, I received a call back. The call back was because micro calcifications were found on my mammogram, which were not present the prior year.

The date 06/03/14 at 8:30 am will forever be in my memory because that is when I heard the words “You have Breast Cancer.” I was diagnosed with Lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS) and Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) stage 0 on the left side. Then, I heard that more than likely I would need a mastectomy due to the size of the area in relation to my small breast. I received the news after undergoing several mammograms, an ultrasound, two ultrasound-guided core needle biopsies and one stereotactic-guided biopsy. I never expected to be diagnosed with Breast Cancer. I do not have a family history of any cancer, exercised regularly, didn’t smoke, didn’t drink and had six years of clear mammograms. I did not know that I had



dense breast tissue, which can make mammograms less reliable. I even made my biopsy results for first appointment of the day figuring I would quickly be done and off to work. The table in the room for the results was empty except for a single box of tissue. As I waited to receive the results, I remember thinking tissue on the table was not a good sign. I was totally shocked by the news.

I then travelled through a whirlwind of appointments: general surgeon, plastic surgeon, oncologist, and MRI. I kept a positive outlook and hoped for the

best. I ultimately decided to have a bilateral mastectomy with immediate reconstruction in the form of tissue expanders which were later exchanged for my final implants. Pathology results found an additional site of DCIS (in a separate quadrant) but both DCIS sites were stage 0 so spared a more extensive road to recovery. The only reason this additional site was detected was because I elected for a bilateral mastectomy. I often wonder if this additional site would have led to cancer return if I had chosen lumpectomy with radiation. I wonder if my journey would have been different if I had avoided my mammogram that year.

I am really grateful for my amazing team of medical doctors and nurses. I am thankful for the support of my husband, friends, and coworkers because the road to recovery was very painful and difficult. I cannot express my gratitude in only a few words. I am forever grateful for their generosity.

I decided to become a 2016 Face because I want something good to come out of what I have experienced. I want other women to know that breast cancer is not limited to those with family history, that regular mammograms are important and to be their own advocate. I want other women to know that dense breast tissue can make mammograms less reliable and be proactive to discuss with their healthcare team. I want other women to know about support resources available to them. I want other women to know that breast cancer is not a death sentence. Breast cancer is not just about pink ribbons in October.