

Winning the fight against cancer *for a second time*

At just 44 years old, Christine Christianson has battled, and defeated, cancer twice in her life.

Her first bout with cancer was at the young age of 21. "Having been diagnosed with bone cancer when I was 21 taught me how to go into proactive mode," Christianson says. When she learned last year that she had breast cancer, she felt more prepared for the challenging fight against the cancer cells once again threatening her health.

In August of 2012, Christianson first had an indication something was wrong when she discovered a lump in her left breast. "I waited four months and watched it myself," she explains. "Eventually, I decided (because of the influence of friends and family) to set up an appointment to see Dr. Chapman at Perham Health."

Dr. Joshua Chapman, an internal medicine specialist, ordered a mammogram and then an ultrasound after Christianson's mammogram results came back inconclusive. He decided that the lump was concerning enough to recommend Christianson to Dr. Randel Stolee, a general surgeon with Perham Health.

"We're very fortunate to have Dr. Stolee here," mentions Dr. Chapman. "I make referrals to specialists other places nearly every day, but I have every confidence in Dr. Stolee addressing problems like this in a timely, effective, and compassionate manner. The fact that he's local and so convenient is nice, but it is more important that he provides excellent care."

In addition to the lump Christianson noticed in her left breast, Dr. Stolee discovered a second lump in her right breast and made the decision to surgically remove both lumps. The surgery was close to an hour long and Christianson was able to go home later on the same day.

"Dr. Stolee told me he was concerned about the left side," Christianson recalls. "I was so thankful that he made sure I was taken

care of right away. I wasn't put on the back burner."

The lumps were removed in December of 2012, with lab results revealing that the lump from the left breast was malignant. "My initial thought was that I was going to go to a big hospital in the Twin Cities," Christianson says. "After I got such great treatment at Perham Health and saw how meticulous they were, I chose to stay here and follow-up with my treatment in Perham. I was very well taken care of."

Christianson was diagnosed with tubular carcinoma of the breast. According to Dr. Stolee, tubular carcinoma of the breast is less common and has a more favorable prognosis than the more commonly found infiltrating ductal adenocarcinoma form of breast cancer.

"Tubular carcinoma of the breast makes up about 10 to 20 percent of breast cancers," Dr. Stolee explains. "It is detected more frequently with regular mammographic breast cancer screening. Tubular carcinoma of the breast was less commonly detected before we used this method of screening."

"My two kids and boyfriend came with me when Dr. Stolee gave me the news that it was cancer," Christianson recalls. "They each had an opportunity to ask questions. All of them were very pleased with how Dr. Stolee and Dr. Chapman handled the entire situation. They were both extremely accommodating and helpful."

After her lumpectomy in Perham, it was decided that she should undergo a surgical procedure to take out her lymph nodes to make sure the cancer hadn't spread.



Christine Christianson is thankful to once again be cancer free. The brave 44-year-old credits Perham Health's medical team with helping her overcome a recent battle against breast cancer.

Dr. Stolee connected Christianson with Dr. Michael Bouton, a breast surgeon at Sanford Roger Maris Cancer Center in Fargo where the second surgery would be performed.

“Managing cancer requires an integrated team of specialists and support personnel,” says Dr. Stolee. “Perham Health’s close working relationship and electronic medical records allow us to work as a team even though we are at a distance.”

“Roger Maris Cancer Center is a state-of-the-art approved cancer treatment facility that participates in research studies and quality measures nationally. This means our patients have access to the same high level of care that they could expect if they went to a national cancer center or Mayo Clinic. What is even better is that this means they can receive their treatment close to home. In fact, one of the oncologists from Roger Maris Cancer Center (Dr. Denise Snow) comes to Perham and sees patients here.”

Christianson also mentions how Perham Health’s partnership with the award-winning Sanford Roger Maris Cancer Center was a benefit to her throughout her treatment

process. “It made it so much more convenient for me to be able to go right from Perham to Fargo and have Dr. Bouton know exactly what was going on. Both teams of doctors have kept a close connection throughout my treatment.”

In January of 2013, Christianson had Dr. Bouton surgically remove her left side lymph nodes. After her surgery, Christianson was out of work for six weeks. She was told to take it easy and give her body time to heal properly. Dr. Bouton also arranged for her to start follow-up appointments with Dr. Anu Gaba, an oncologist in Fargo.



While battling breast cancer last year, Christine Christianson was grateful for the continued support she received from Dr. Randel Stolee, a general surgeon at Perham Health. Dr. Stolee performed Christianson’s lumpectomy, connected her with Sanford Roger Maris Cancer Center in Fargo, and made himself available to answer her questions throughout the treatment process.



A healthy Christine Christianson hits the golf course to enjoy one of her favorite leisure activities before the course closed for the season.

Throughout the months of March and April, Christianson made the drive from her home in Clitherall to Fergus Falls for a total of 36 radiation treatments. The treatments were scheduled five days a week, for six weeks. She was also prescribed a medicine called Tamoxifen that suppresses estrogen and works as a preventive measure.

“My doctors say it is very unlikely that this particular cancer will come back,” Christianson is pleased to report. “My percentage of not having a recurrence is very high with the surgical procedure I underwent and the medicine I’m on.”

She now has follow-up appointments in Fargo once every four months for the next six years. For two years after that, she’ll see a doctor once every six months.

“Both Dr. Stolee and Dr. Chapman have also told me to come to them any time if I have any questions or concerns,” Christianson says. “I have taken them up

on that a couple of times throughout this whole process and both of them have been extremely helpful.”

Christianson is now feeling well and is thankful to have her health back once again. She says she is extremely grateful not to be experiencing side effects or issues after her second cancer battle. She’s enjoying her health, spending as much time as possible with her family and loved ones, and even making time for an occasional round of golf.

“Christine gets all the credit. She noticed the lump and bravely sought help,” says Dr. Chapman. “If a woman discovers a lump or is concerned about a change in her breast(s), it is best to schedule an exam and discussion with a physician as soon as possible.”

When asked if she has any advice for fellow cancer patients, Christianson’s answer comes quickly, “My advice is to stay as strong and positive as you possibly can. It is tough in that type of a situation to focus on the good. But you have to keep going. Keep fighting the battle, because it can be won.”

Christianson’s determination, positive attitude, and strong support system, coupled with the excellent medical care she received, translate into an inspirational cancer success story. Not just once, but twice, she’s proven how the battle can be won.

Assessment identifies health issues and road map for healthy lifestyle choices

As a nation, we spend \$2.2 trillion per year on health costs and 75 cents of each healthcare dollar is spent on chronic disease, such as heart disease, asthma, cancer and diabetes. These diseases often are preventable and frequently manageable through early detection, improved diet, exercise and treatment. Perham Health is committed to being part of the solution to prevent disease and improve the health of the communities we serve.

To this end, Perham Health engaged in a community assessment to identify critical health issues in its service area. The assessment was prompted by the Affordable Care Act which requires non-profit hospitals to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). Even though public hospitals, such as Perham Health, are exempt from the mandate, we voluntarily participated because we believe

to gain an understanding and to help improve the health of our communities, the assessment was essential.

The CHNA represented a comprehensive community-wide process where Perham Health connected with a wide range of public and private organizations, such as public health, educational institutions, health-related professionals, local government officials, and faith-based organizations to evaluate the community's health and social needs. Perham Health engaged in this assessment in 2012-2013.

The assessment included a survey which the public was invited to complete, interviews with community stakeholders, focus groups with key audiences, and community forums. This information has been gathered and shows that stakeholders identified obesity, mental



health services, and access to specialized healthcare services as key healthcare issues impacting their communities. Perham Health will now undertake health initiatives with partnering agencies to address these issues to promote healthy lifestyle choices into the patterns of daily life.

The complete Community Health Needs Assessment report is viewable at www.perhamhealth.org under the resources tab.

We recognize that much of what influences individual and community health happens outside of the doctor's office – in schools, workplaces and neighborhoods. Let's act together to create healthier places to live, learn, work and play.

Charitable giving supports Perham Health Foundation

Each year, donors share their spirit of giving by supporting the Perham Health Foundation. These gifts make an impact on patients and residents by enabling Perham Health to purchase life-saving equipment, offer advanced training to healthcare staff, enhance the quality of life for the residents and so much more. The end of the year is a good time to review your financial matters and to consider giving to the Perham Health Foundation.

Established in 2004, the Perham Health Foundation provides an opportunity for area community members to sustain Perham Health's mission to promote health and wellness throughout life. One hundred percent of your donation

is invested in healthcare enabling our staff to utilize the best equipment, facilities, and medical resources when providing quality healthcare for our community.

There are many variations on ways to make a donation.

Direct Gifts can make an immediate impact on health and wellness care in our community, and include:

- Cash and/or stocks
- Personal property and/or real estate
- Matching gifts from employers

Planned Gifts allow you to make a long-term impact. They can be an important part of your estate

planning, benefitting your family and Perham Health as well, while providing significant tax savings.

Tribute Gifts can be given in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special person or occasion.

We recommend donors considering gifts discuss these options with their tax advisor.

If you would like more information about the Perham Health Foundation, please contact the foundation office at (218) 347-1304.

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Welcome Nicolai Esala, DO



Perham Health is excited to introduce Nicolai Esala, DO, family medicine, as the newest member of its healthcare team. Dr. Esala started seeing patients in October.

“My goal is to provide the type of care I would want my family and friends to have. I spend time each visit to make connections with my patients, finding ways that we can work together to improve their overall health,” says Dr. Esala.

Dr. Esala grew up in nearby Ottertail, Minn., and attended Perham High School. Upon graduation, he attended Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., receiving his undergraduate degree. He then attended medical school at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Bradenton, Fla. Dr. Esala completed his family medicine residency at the University of Minnesota-Methodist Hospital and his sports

medicine fellowship at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Sports medicine is of particular interest to Dr. Esala. Because of this, he will be working with our orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Matthew Nelsen, and all of Perham’s local physicians to help athletes of all ages in our community be at the top of their game.

Dr. Esala is married to his wife, Kelly. In his free time, Dr. Esala enjoys golf, fishing, water sports and pretty much anything outdoors.

“I’ve only been at Perham Health a short time, but I am very impressed at how dedicated the staff and providers are to their patients,” Dr. Esala said. “I am excited to become part of their provider group.”

Appointments with Dr. Esala can be made by calling the Perham Health Clinic at (218) 347-1200.