

## GENETIC COUNSELING AT PROVIDENCE ALASKA CANCER CENTER

## Donors help make the latest in technology and tools available, improving patient outcomes for our friends, families and neighbors

Sally was diagnosed with breast cancer at Providence in 2002. She was no stranger to what came next, having been through diagnosis and treatment with both of her parents. Sally was treated successfully at the Providence Cancer Center, and for nearly two decades remained healthy and cancer free.

In fall of 2020, after a routine mammogram that showed nothing of concern, a genetic counselor at the Providence Cancer Center suggested that Sally be tested for the indicators of higher cancer risk. Sally had been tested after her original diagnosis, but after learning of the many advances in research and technology that had improved the testing in intervening years, Sally agreed to an updated test.

**Sally tested positive for a cancer risk indicating gene that that was not possible to test for in 2002,** and the genetic counselor advised Sally to get an MRI, which can show tumors that might not be visible on a mammogram. When a new tumor was found and a biopsy confirmed Sally had a new cancer, she was quickly scheduled for surgery. She was successfully treated in February 2021, less than a month before the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the Alaska medical system into crisis management.

In Sally's own words:

*"If my counselor had not encouraged me to have additional testing 19 years after my initial testing..*

*If she hadn't suggested an MRI as soon as the test was returned...*

*If Providence hadn't moved quickly to have the MRI and other diagnostic testing done...*

*If my physician and surgeon hadn't moved quickly...*

*Then I might have found myself unknowingly carrying a tumor throughout the COVID shutdowns, which might have resulted in a much-delayed diagnosis and possibly a higher stage cancer.*

*I owe a great deal of gratitude to Providence Hospital and to the Genetics Counseling Program."*

With their gifts, our donors are extending a helping hand to patients and families going through some of the most vulnerable times of their lives. **Because of donor generosity, our Alaska friends, family and neighbors receive the care and comfort they need from caregivers with the best technology and tools available to treat patients safely and compassionately.**

Our donors make this possible—thank you.