

A Sisterhood of Care

The Women's
Committee Supports
Breast Health at
Sentara Martha
Jefferson Hospital

After losing beloved family members to cancer and going through multiple breast biopsies herself, Franchesca “Fran” Fede Gomez counts herself blessed to be cancer-free. She knows, however, never to take her health for granted.

During her first visit to Sentara Martha Jefferson’s High-Risk Breast Program shortly after its inception in 2017, Gomez was assessed as having a lifetime risk for breast cancer of nearly 50 percent—significantly higher than the average lifetime risk of 13 percent.

“That was definitely scary news to hear,” recalls the energetic attorney, 49, who juggles a full life as a mom to two daughters and two stepchildren, president of Allen & Carwile PC, and Waynesboro’s commissioner of accounts.

Despite the many demands on her time, Fran takes action daily to reduce her cancer risk, from getting regular exercise to limiting her alcohol consumption. She also makes the



Fran Gomez credits the High-Risk Breast Program with helping her proactively manage her health.

trip from her home in Staunton to Sentara Martha Jefferson for increased monitoring through screening mammography and breast magnetic resonance imaging scans.

“They really stay on top of things,” says Gomez of her team of nurse practitioners and oncologists in the High-Risk Breast Program, whom she credits with educating her about her risk and giving her the tools to respond proactively.

Every year, an estimated 1,000 women like Gomez are identified at Sentara Martha

Jefferson as being at high risk for breast cancer. The High-Risk Breast Program, which serves the specific needs of these patients, is an integral part of Sentara Martha Jefferson’s nationally accredited Comprehensive Breast Center. The center’s hallmark is its holistic approach, which combines clinical excellence with a robust suite of programs that address body image, mental health and survivorship.

Philanthropic support is the engine behind these personalized services, and for nearly 30

years, The Women’s Committee (TWC) of the Martha Jefferson Hospital Foundation has been an essential partner in supporting women’s health. Through annual fundraising events, including Martha’s Market and the In The Pink Tennis Tournament, TWC has contributed more than \$6 million to the hospital.

“We wouldn’t be able to offer this comprehensive program without The Women’s Committee,” says Crystal Chu, manager, Sentara Blue Ridge Cancer Program. “Our com-



Marianne’s Room provides wigs, scarves, and other resources for breast cancer patients with funding from The Women’s Committee of the Martha Jefferson Hospital Foundation.

munity really comes together to help us offer everything our patients may need beyond their treatments.”

Women Helping Women

For their part, TWC members are inspired by a passion for ensuring that all women in our community have access to the care they need.

“TWC members are all there for the same purpose: to save women’s lives and support those battling cancer,” says TWC Chair Jennifer McGlothlin, whose own family history of breast cancer drives her passion for supporting women’s health. “I just feel it’s my calling to make women aware of the importance of getting an annual mammogram.”

Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital is offering four Free Breast Health Screenings in 2022:

April 23, 2022

July 23, 2022

October 22, 2022

December 10, 2022

8:00 am to 2:00 pm

**Sentara Martha Jefferson
Outpatient Care Center
595 Martha Jefferson Drive,
Charlottesville**

For more information and to schedule an appointment, call **1-800-SENTARA (1-800-736-8272)**

Get Involved!

The Women’s Committee (TWC) of the Martha Jefferson Hospital Foundation champions the health and wellness of women in the Charlottesville community and beyond. This group of dedicated, determined women shares a passion for making life-saving programs, services and state-of-the-art technologies available for all women.

“We share a camaraderie and excitement for what we’re doing,” says TWC Chair Jennifer McGlothlin, who makes time to lead the group as part of a busy life as president of her own pharmaceuticals company and a mom of four, including three college-aged children. “This has always been such a wonderful group of women. Whenever we meet, the joy among us is infectious.”

Volunteers are needed for TWC’s two annual events—Martha’s Market and the In The Pink Tennis Tournament—and to support the Free Breast Health Screening Days, as well as other service opportunities. To find out more or get involved, please contact TWCchair@gmail.com, call the Martha Jefferson Hospital Foundation at 434-654-8258 or visit mjhfoundation.org/the-womens-committee.



TWC funding and volunteer support enables Sentara Martha Jefferson to offer four Free Breast Health Screening Days annually. These events provide mammograms and health screenings for approximately 100 women who would otherwise forego care due to a lack of resources. TWC also established and supports Marianne’s Room, a special resource room for women diagnosed with cancer, providing wigs, scarves and special “chemo caps,” as well as soft prostheses and camisoles for breast cancer patients after a mastectomy.

To help women care for their spirits through the cancer journey, TWC also makes possible healing services such as massage therapy, yoga, exercise classes and support groups. In addition, the group’s generosity supports blanket warmers and special chairs that bring comfort to Infusion Center patients dur-

ing treatment, and a survivorship program that helps women thrive through the physical and emotional changes that come with a cancer diagnosis.

“We make sure that we’re taking care of every aspect of the cancer journey,” McGlothlin says. “We’re all about upholding the Sentara Martha Jefferson Caring Tradition.”

A Sense of Security

For Gomez, who has a sister with stage 4 breast cancer and lost her mother to the disease, the hospital’s partnership with TWC has had a tangible impact on her life, giving her the tools to take responsibility for her own health, as well as the reminders and support to stay on track. Most of all, though, TWC has shown her that she’s not alone in her health journey.

“I have lots of caring people looking out for me,” she says. “I feel safer knowing that.”