

Mammogram delay could have been fatal

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STAFF PHOTO BY GREG LYNCH

Kimberly Oswald, of Fairfield, was diagnosed with breast cancer earlier this year. Thanks to early detection, Oswald is now cancer-free. Her co-workers at Ross Institute of Medical & Dental Technology in Cincinnati, walked with her during the Oct. 17 Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.

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By Rick McCrabb, Columnist

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CINCINNATI — Two years ago, Kimberly Oswald — with a family history of cancer — had her annual mammogram.

She was, according to her doctor, “good to go.”

Then, one year later, because she’s “very diligent” about her routine mammograms, Oswald scheduled a check-up. But with her husband, Rick, out of work and the family with no medical insurance, she considered delaying the procedure.

What’s another week, right? Or even a month?

But she kept thinking about her mother, a breast cancer survivor, and her three daughters and husband. She didn’t worry about the expense. She made her appointment.

We make decisions every day. Few are the difference between living and dying.

Oswald was diagnosed with breast cancer in April. Since then, she has undergone a lumpectomy, mastectomy of her left breast and multiple radiation treatments.

Her doctors at Jewish Hospital told her if she had waited — even a few months until her husband found a job — her breast cancer may have spread and possibly been fatal.

“I’d be fighting for my life right now,” Oswald, 53, of Fairfield said this week at Ross Institute of Medical and Dental Technology, where she works as an administrative assistant.

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Oswald credits the support of her family and a team of medical experts for helping her maintain a positive outlook. She is grateful to Cincinnati-area doctors Donna L. Stahl, and Peter R. Fried for saving her life.

Her Ross IMDT family has been equally supportive. Oswald returned to her job this month. So far, she's raised \$600 for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. On Oct. 17, staff, students and faculty walked with her for the 5-mile walk around downtown Cincinnati and Newport.

In addition, she has undergone several lifestyle changes related to diet and exercise. She avoids sugar like a diabetic.

Breast cancer also changed her outlook. It took her breast, but gave her a new perspective.

"You know how you say, 'We'll do this when we retire' or 'When the kids are grown,' " she said. "We do it now. There may not be a tomorrow."

Her three daughters, Lindsey DeLay, 31, Lauren Oswald, 22, and Alexis Oswald, 16, a junior at Fairfield High School, have been tested for cancer. She wants to stop the breast cancer chain in the family.

Right now, her family is priority No. 1. Nothing else makes the list.

"Time is short," she said. "It used to always be about time and money. Now, time is more important."