

# LIVING WITH *Colon Cancer*

ADVANCED CARE HELPS PATIENT MAINTAIN QUALITY OF LIFE



## COLON CANCER SCREENING GUIDELINES

- ◆ People at average risk should start screening tests at age 50.
- ◆ People at an increased risk should discuss their screening needs with their health care provider before age 50.
- ◆ People 75 years of age or older should discuss the need for continued colorectal screenings with their health care provider.

**E**xercise is a huge part of Susan Theeck's life. She visits her local YMCA five days a week where she participates in organized workout classes and then walks the Y's indoor track, where she logs 6,000 steps each day. She also practices tai chi and yoga and has a passion for photography.

Susan, known for her upbeat and vibrant demeanor, also has stage 4 colon cancer.

"I feel better when I'm active," says Susan, 60, who lives in the downriver area of metro Detroit. "I do all I can to take care of my body. The care I've received from the Karmanos Cancer Institute has allowed me to remain stable, feel good and continue exercising."

Susan's cancer journey began in August 2010 at a local clinic with a routine colonoscopy—the standard method for detecting polyps in the lining of the colon and rectum. A tissue biopsy confirmed she had stage 1 colon cancer.

"I had no symptoms, so I was surprised," Susan says. "No one in my family ever had cancer and I was never close to someone with cancer. I didn't know what to expect."

After undergoing a colon resection she was put under surveillance. Her doctors noted abnormal blood work and a lung biopsy was performed. Susan then learned the cancer had spread to her lungs, elevating the disease to stage 4.

"At that point, I decided to take my care into my own hands. I spent a lot of time researching treatments and medications and finding the best doctor available," she said. "I specifically sought out Dr. Philip at Karmanos."

In January 2014, Susan began seeing Philip A. Philip, M.D., Ph.D., F.R.C.P., leader of the Gastrointestinal and Neuroendocrine Multidisciplinary Team at Karmanos. Dr. Philip ordered a PET scan for Susan, which found that the cancer had also spread to her liver – a three-centimeter tumor her other doctors had missed.

After consulting with Karmanos oncology experts specializing in her disease, Susan pursued a targeted medication regimen that suppresses the growth of her tumors. She also visits a Karmanos clinic for pain management. Today, Susan maintains good quality of life while managing her disease.

"In the past 10 years, we have better diagnostics, drugs and surgical methods for colorectal cancer patients, and we continue to make advances," Dr. Philip says. "Patient survival has improved greatly. Today, we can control the disease and keep many patients living with advanced disease for a relatively long time and with good quality of life. Susan is a great example."

"Everyone at Karmanos has been wonderful," Susan says. "I owe my success to my faith, knowledge and support system, positive attitude, active body and having the best oncology team. I couldn't ask for a more caring and compassionate medical staff."