Proton therapy preserves quality of life for breast cancer survivor

By Theresa Edwards Makrush

On March 27, 2012, nine months after her wedding day, Kelly Jones learned that she had breast cancer. Kelly was diagnosed with locally advanced stage I left breast cancer. During the preoperative evaluation, it was determined that Kelly's tumor was 7 centimeters in size. No lymph nodes were found to be involved with cancer.

Dr. Nancy Mendenhall, a radiation oncologist at UF Health Proton Therapy Institute, performed an MRI to determine if Kelly's tumor could be treated with proton therapy. She was very encouraged when the MRI showed that the tumor could be treated with proton therapy. Proton therapy uses beams of protons injected through the skin. As compared with other types of radiation, proton therapy limits the amount of damage to healthy tissue around the tumor and is a more precise treatment for cancers in the chest that could involve the heart or lungs.

Kelly decided to undergo proton therapy. She started treatment in April 2012. Each treatment lasted about 12 to 15 minutes. She had three weeks of treatment. The treatment was extremely well-tolerated. The side effects are minimal and not as long lasting as those from conventional treatment. Kelly mentioned that the total time spent on the machine was only 15 minutes per treatment, with the last two minutes being the time on the table. Kelly decided to have a mastectomy followed by six rounds of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation.

Three years later, Kelly has no sign of cancer. She and her family and friends of the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida are grateful for what proton therapy has given her. She and her family and friends are also grateful to UF Health Proton Therapy Institute.

Proton therapy is a relatively new treatment option. The Institute was the first in the United States to offer proton therapy. It is a form of radiation therapy used to treat cancer. The proton beam focuses on the tumor and minimizes damage to healthy tissue. Proton therapy is now being offered at the UF Health Proton Therapy Institute. It is a powerful and persuasive message of hope to all who see the true, emotional moment of her ringing the chime in the main lobby.

Sincerely,

Stuart Klein

Executive Director

You can read more about her story in this issue of the Alumni magazine. For years, Kelly's mother Gail Brill had volunteered at the tournament, never knowing that one day her daughter would decide to participate in the tournament. The tournament gave Kelly an opportunity to experience the joy of making a difference in her community and at the same time, she was able to fundraise for a cause that is near and dear to her heart.

The tournament was held on November 5 at 12 p.m. in the Research Room. The tournament was part of an ever-changing face of those who have sought a place of support and comfort. The tournament was also a great opportunity to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida. The tournament was a great opportunity to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida. The tournament was a great opportunity to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida. The tournament was a great opportunity to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida.