

COURAGE, LIFE & HOPE

REFLECTIONS *of a journey*



ASPIRUS™
REGIONAL
CANCER CENTER

Passion for excellence. Compassion for people.



Carrie Nordgren

When gastrointestinal specialist Raymond Hartke, MD told Carrie Nordgren she had cancer, Carrie went blank. In fact, she remembers almost nothing about their conversation after that moment.

“I thought, my God, I’m never going to experience grandchildren, or retirement with my husband,” she said. “I remember looking at my husband and thinking, ‘That means death.’ But it didn’t.”

It has been more than three years since Nordgren was diagnosed with Stage 2 colon cancer, and she feels great. Last summer, she joyfully welcomed her first grandchild, Emma, into the world.

The journey hasn’t been easy, but Carrie attributes her recovery to three things: a great personal support network, strong faith in God and excellent health care.

Carrie’s illness began unremarkably with three days of flu-like symptoms, which didn’t alarm her because she often experienced similar side effects from her diabetes medication. When she finally decided to see a doctor about the problem, she had gotten so weak she could barely drive.

Her physician admitted her to the hospital, where she received blood transfusions to raise a hemoglobin level that had dropped precipitously because of severe internal bleeding. She was referred to Dr. Hartke, and the grueling diagnosis and treatment process began.

After a surgery that was more extensive than expected, Carrie started a 6-month chemotherapy regimen under the care of medical oncologist Hamied Rezazadeh, MD.

“I didn’t lose my hair, which was a wonderful thing,” she said. “The worst part was nausea, just feeling sick to my stomach, and the lack of energy.”

Every Friday morning Carrie would receive a treatment that would drain her to the point that she required three or four days to return to her normal self. Yet throughout therapy, she never missed a day of work.

“All in all, it was a long six months,” she said. “But the way the treatments were given, and the care I received at the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center made it wonderful. They saved me. They really did.”



In addition to the clinical care offered at the Aspirus Regional Cancer Center, Carrie had the benefit of a strong group of family supporters. Her husband and children, plus her five siblings and mother, were a constant source of encouragement through phone calls and visits. They buoyed her spirits and gave her confidence.

“I was so down and so depressed,” Carrie said. “I had watched my dad die of cancer, and he suffered. I didn’t know if I could do that.”

But she has persevered. And together, she and her family have grown and learned about life. She has a new outlook.

“When everything is going right, you forget how precious your life is and how precious all the people are who are connected to you,” Carrie said. “Everything I do, whether it’s my job or my personal life, I make it really count. I want to remember everything.”