



## NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS HOSPITAL

### NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Breast Cancer Awareness Month: The Importance of Screening**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, October 17, 2019—** In mid-2018, Sophia Van Nikkelen-Kuyper was diagnosed with stage two breast cancer. Now more than a year since she had a lumpectomy at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), her 12-month checkup has shown both breasts to be cancer-free, and she’s sharing her story to encourage others – both women and men – to get checked.

Van Nikkelen-Kuyper started as a patient at NHH through the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP), a province-wide, organized cancer screening program managed by Cancer Care Ontario that provides high-quality breast cancer screening throughout Ontario. NHH operates as both an OBSP clinic, and an assessment site, with all services under one roof – a full diagnostic imaging department, radiologists available to read scans, the ability to biopsy, a surgical services program, and a chemotherapy clinic. The diagnostic imaging department conducts around 6,200 mammography exams each year, roughly 4,000 of which are through OBSP.

Originally from South Africa, Van Nikkelen-Kuyper has lived in Canada for 34 years, and Northumberland County for four. She’s lived a healthy life: was a half-marathon runner, had not been previously diagnosed with any serious illnesses before, and started going for regular mammography exams at age 50 – the recommended age for most women to begin.

After a scan at NHH in 2017 by Senior Mammography Technologist, Jennifer Fudge, a follow-up ultrasound was conducted, and she was asked to come back six months later for another scan. At this next appointment, it was recommended by the attending radiologist that a biopsy be done, and it was then confirmed she had breast cancer. During this time, her husband was receiving treatment for cancer at NHH – making for an additionally stressful and scary time.

“The care I received at NHH was phenomenal,” remembers Van Nikkelen-Kuyper. “All of the staff were amazing, and everything ran like clockwork.”

On the day of her husband’s funeral, Van Nikkelen-Kuyper met with her surgeon, Dr. Alison Tilley, and one month later, Dr. Tilley performed her lumpectomy. Today, she is cancer-free and continues to get regular screening. She hopes that sharing her story will highlight the importance of OBSP, and is grateful to have this program and subsequent supports so close in the community.

“The size of our hospital really lends to great teamwork,” says Fudge. “We have open, established communications with our radiologists and our surgeons, and can easily call on other departments or pull others in when needed – it’s a fluid process.”

“As soon as you walk into the hospital, you’re greeted by a friendly face,” says Van Nikkelen-Kuyper. “That, combined with the outstanding care from everyone helps make you feel almost at home during each visit. Having access to that kind of care in our community makes such a difference – having to travel would only add more stress to an already stressful time.”

OBSP recommends most women ages 50-74 get screened every two years with mammography, and studies have shown that regular mammograms lower the risk of dying from breast cancer in this age bracket. For women confirmed to be at high-risk of developing breast cancer, OBSP recommends more frequent screening, with yearly mammograms and breast magnetic resonance imaging from ages 30-69. Any woman from age 50-74 can self-refer to OBSP, with no doctor's referral required and once a patient is in OBSP, they will receive notifications and reminders for recommended checks.

This October, in honour of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, two events are being held in Cobourg with all proceeds directed to the Clay and Elaine Elliott Women's Health Centre at NHH. Curves is selling \$10 'Punch Out Breast Cancer' cards for 10 workouts throughout the month, and Boston Pizza is hosting a Stand Up to Cancer evening on October 23 from 5:00p.m.-9:30p.m. Proceeds from events like these help purchase much needed medical equipment, like the state-of-the-art GE Sonographe Pristina mammography unit that was purchased in 2018 by funds raised through the [NHH Foundation](#).

For more information on OBSP, visit [www.cancercareontario.ca](http://www.cancercareontario.ca) or visit NHH's Diagnostic Imaging program web pages here: <https://nhh.ca/Patients/PatientCareServices/Diagnostics/DiagnosticImaging>

**Contact:** Jennifer Gillard, [jgillard@nhh.ca](mailto:jgillard@nhh.ca) or 905-377-7757.

**About Northumberland Hills Hospital**– Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca) or follow us on Twitter @NorHillsHosp.

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