

CHANGING, and SAVING LIVES *together*

The great thing about our December patient stories is how they show what can happen when our whole community works together. Both men, **Jerome Sapp** and **Douglas Bennett**, have been long-time Clinic patients. When each came to the Clinic, he was diagnosed with high blood pressure; we also found that Jerome is diabetic. They receive care for these chronic illnesses and free prescription medicines through the Patient Assistance Program at the Clinic. Jerome also receives diabetes supplies from the Clinic.

Because we recommended Jerome, 61, and Douglas, 56, be tested, each discovered in 2023 that he has prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is known as a “silent killer” because it often has few symptoms. We can’t treat them for prostate cancer at the Clinic—that requires specialty care in a dedicated facility. We thank God that our community partners have so generously stepped up and participated in their successful treatment. Jerome is receiving his cancer care from Piedmont Oncology, and Douglas is a patient at City of Hope. Without these organizations, we simply could not offer these men a pathway to health. Their own words are the best way to understand our journey.

Jerome found out about the Clinic from Dr. Jack Powell, III, who recognized that Jerome had dangerous, potentially fatal health issues. “I was walking around like a time bomb. My sugar (blood sugar level) was up to 400, and my blood pressure was high.” With regular care from Dr. Crosby and Rhonda Whitton, RN, NP, these issues are controlled. Jerome also benefitted from the diabetes education offered by our wonderful volunteer, Mary Prost, RN.

*Without Samaritan Clinic,
where would I be?*

— JEROME SAPP



Earlier this year, Rhonda recommended that Jerome be screened for colon and prostate cancer. Although the colonoscopy results (given by City of Hope) were good, his PSA was elevated. Jerome was not aware of the need for testing or his risk for prostate cancer. “I didn’t know anything about my prostate; didn’t even know I had one. Rhonda explained all that to me.” Following a prostate biopsy by Dr. Micah Blackmon (urologist), Jerome was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Dr. Roger Chen (urologist) discussed a treatment plan with him and Jerome began his treatment.

Through his treatment at Piedmont Oncology, Jerome has gotten to know the staff, all the way from Mike Robertson (CEO) and Dr. Minesh Patel (oncologist) to the nurses and technicians who care for him. “They tell me they don’t understand how someone can go through what I’m going through, and there’s not a sad thing about me. How in the world did you get that good feeling? I say, ‘When you’re around good people, they will help see about you.’”

Jerome’s treatment would not have been successful without the constant support of Amy Boren (Nurse Manager) and Christy Van Drew (Practice Manager). They helped Jerome navigate his chemo treatments at Piedmont Oncology. Dr. Patel’s office even allowed Amy to bring an educational video to the Clinic so Jerome could better understand his treatment. “I couldn’t have done it without Amy and Christy. They are down with me, shoulder-to-shoulder. We’re just like family. I wish I could tell the whole world on TV what we have here. I was tore up, but now I’m back together. Ever since I came here, I’ve been done right. I’ve been respected from the front door to the back door. I couldn’t ask for more.”

CONTINUED ON REVERSE →

Douglas's journey started six years ago when his aunt advised him to seek help at the Clinic for a hernia. The first visit lasted six hours, not because of the hernia, but because his blood pressure was so high he was in "stroke mode." With monitoring and treatment from Laura Alton, PA, at the Clinic, Douglas has learned to manage his blood pressure and keep it under control. Laura also monitored his PSA screening, and when his results showed a problem, she referred him to our wonderful community partner, City of Hope, where Dr. Scott Shelfo (urologist) and his team provided excellent care.

Staying in touch with Dr. Shelfo's office at City of Hope and getting to appointments were tough for Douglas. In times when he didn't have money coming in, he couldn't pay his phone or car insurance bills, so communication and transportation were big problems. His Gleason score indicated that his prostate cancer was likely to spread quickly, but it seemed impossible for Douglas to get to appointments in a timely way. In addition to facing surgery for prostate cancer, Douglas was still dealing with the trauma of his mother's recent death. At times, he lost hope.



This clinic is #1 with me!

— DOUGLAS BENNETT

Amy Boren (Nurse Manager) stepped in. She worked with the staff at City of Hope to coordinate his care, and they worked with Amy and Douglas as a team. Dr. Shelfo's office now contacts both Amy and Douglas with all information and instructions, and Amy makes sure Douglas is there on time. As Douglas remembers, "Amy pushed me places I didn't want to go. I was ready to give up. I was doubting myself and saying, 'I don't want to do it. It is what it is.' But Amy kept saying, 'No, you're going to be alright.' I thank Amy for that. She motivated me. I was scared to be in the hospital. I didn't have anyone. She was the one who stood by my side. That's why this Clinic is number 1 with me. I love this Clinic."

On November 8, Douglas had his surgery. "Amy was there through it all. She called me to check on my progress. You can tell that the people at the Clinic love what they do. They are special here. I would refer anyone to come to the Clinic. If you get in there, they're going to take care of you. They make sure you have transportation, gas cards; they look out for you. That's the care I want all my people to have." Thanks to the generosity of our community partner, City of Hope, and the tenacity of our Clinic staff, Douglas has a chance to survive and to thrive. What a Christmas gift!

Many people with serious health problems like those encountered by Douglas and Jerome go through life unaware until it's too late. Without insurance or the resources to prevent the consequences of chronic disease, they just cannot get the help they need. But the story doesn't have to end like that. One thing Douglas and Jerome have learned is that others, a community-wide team, care enough about them to step in and step up—thank you for helping them live to tell the story.



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