

Challenged by multiple cancer threats, active volunteer **LaVera Davis** turned to NorthShore to keep the disease in check.



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At NorthShore Kellogg Cancer Center, we're open to serve you through telehealth visits or in-person care. Rest assured that our team has extra safety measures in place for active treatment or other critical care needs. To make an appointment, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1208), or go online to learn about the most appropriate appointment options at northshore.org/c7.

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With NorthShoreConnect, patients like LaVera Davis find it easy to manage their healthcare from their smartphones or tablets. Download the mobile app at the Apple App Store or Google Play to check lab results and schedule in-person or telehealth appointments with ease, or sign up at northshore.org/c8.

Standing Tall Against Multiple Cancer Threats

Brave Woman's Approach to Wellness Keeps Her Going

By Brian Justice

LaVera Davis has dedicated her retirement years to serving others. The 72-year-old North Chicago resident is a grateful breast cancer survivor who volunteers at numerous charitable agencies—from serving coffee and planning events at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center to driving patients to doctor appointments through the Lake County ElderCARE program.

WATCHFUL EYE

Davis, whose mother and aunt both died of gallbladder cancer, understands better than most the importance of keeping close tabs on her health. Last year, when a dull pain on her right side persisted, a CT scan revealed gallstones. While that did not surprise Davis, something suspicious on her pancreas did.

"I had no idea there was a more serious threat until I had that test," Davis recalled.

She was referred to Melissa Hogg, MD, NorthShore's Director of Liver and Pancreas Surgery, who identified a high-risk cyst in Davis' pancreas, and her pathology report found a precancerous growth in her gallbladder. Both organs are critical components of the digestive system.

"Most pancreas cysts don't require surgery, but her work-up revealed a 'worrisome feature,'" Dr. Hogg explained. "And with

LaVera's previous breast cancer, family history and her BRCA2 genetic mutation, she's at higher risk for cancer. It required immediate action."

Dr. Hogg performed robotic surgery to remove Davis' gallbladder and part of her pancreas. "It's minimally invasive," noted Dr. Hogg, "so we're able to make smaller incisions and patients spend less time in the hospital, require less pain medication and recover faster."

NEW THREAT EMERGES

Because of her history of cancer, Davis has an MRI every six months. In March 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, she faced a breast cancer recurrence. Under the care of Surgical Oncologist and Vice Chair of Surgery Katharine Yao, MD, Davis once again stood up to a scary health challenge with her typical graceful and calm demeanor.

"She didn't hesitate to move forward with treatment," noted Dr. Yao. "I was able to get an exception to perform surgery during the COVID-19 emergency, and LaVera came through her mastectomies just fine, followed by adjuvant chemotherapy. There have been no issues with her recovery."

"NorthShore made me feel safe," said Davis. "I didn't want to delay care, and I felt much better getting through cancer treatment knowing that special precautions were in



GI Surgeon **Dr. Melissa Hogg** (left) and Oncology Surgeon **Dr. Katharine Yao** are central to LaVera Davis' cancer care at NorthShore.

place during my short hospital stay."

With her chemotherapy completed, Davis remains vigilant about her health and eager to resume helping others through her church, the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Cancer Society.

"LaVera advocates for herself," Dr. Hogg added. "By being proactive and conscientious, she has helped save her own life at least twice now."