



Vitruvian Health

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INFORMATION

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Battling breast cancer in a small town

DALTON, Ga. (October 5, 2026) – Susan Lucas grew up on Long Island with the kind of assuredness that comes from knowing you live in a part of the country that is home to some of the most advanced medical care in the world.

When she met her husband, a Northwest Georgia native who temporarily lived in New York, and they decided to move to Chatsworth, it was her turn to walk through a major life change. What she did not expect was the cascade of medical events that would follow.

First, she had a hysterectomy. Then, during a routine breast exam, her doctor found a lump in her breast and sent her for testing. By March, Lucas had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had started six months of chemo treatment. She went on to have a lumpectomy in September and is now on her cancer-free journey.

Toward the beginning of her treatment, Lucas had three months of treatment that is sometimes known for its aggressiveness and potential challenging side effects. Lucas said she was pleasantly surprised that the treatment was not as severe as she initially expected. Her digestive issues were minimal, her fatigue was manageable, and none of the more bizarre side effects she had heard about happened.

“I heard a lot of horror stories going into this, and I was obviously scared,” she said. “But walking into Peeples Cancer Institute changed my whole perspective of cancer. I was super nervous about being down here in a small town with this diagnosis. I’m from New York, and we have the best of the best healthcare up there, so I was nervous, but the minute I walked into Peeples, all that worry went away.”

Peeples Cancer Institute at Hamilton Medical Center participates in national Phase III clinical trials with National Cancer Institute-designated Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University and is the only ACR-accredited oncology radiation facility within 50 miles of Chattanooga. Board-certified medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, surgeons and skilled support staff provide treatment and support services.

Lucas said she was pleased with the professional care and treatment she received. She said she was very appreciative of her oncologist, Lisa Duhaime, MD, along with the nurses and entire staff who helped her feel that she mattered as a person and not only as a patient.

“They were so incredible and kind. They totally got me through this,” Lucas said. “I was so grateful I was here and not in New York.”

Lucas said she wants people to know cancer treatment is not always bad. “You can get through it,” she said.

Now, Lucas is passionate about encouraging others to get their mammograms on schedule. She’s also enjoying living her life, with multiple children and grandchildren in the family. She is preparing for her daughter’s upcoming fall wedding while continuing to work as a showroom manager for a Christmas wholesaler in Atlanta. She was able to work through most of her treatment, only taking days off for infusions and recovery.

About one in eight women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetimes. When caught early, the five-year relative survival rate is over 99 percent. Lucas said she had no previous health history that would have raised alarms and no breast cancer history in her family.

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Photo: Susan Lucas

About Peebles Cancer Institute

Accredited by the American College of Surgeons - Commission on Cancer, the 46,000-square-foot Peebles Cancer Institute (PCI) at Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) centralizes patient-centered care and outpatient cancer services in one convenient location, allowing for HMC’s expert team of medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, surgeons and clinical support staff to work collaboratively to provide state-of-the-art care in a healing, nurturing environment.

PCI includes: board-certified medical oncologists, radiation oncologists and radiologists; state-of-the-art radiation therapies, including the Varian® TrueBeam linear accelerator and 4D CT Simulator; customized treatment plans; genetic testing and counseling; 3D mammography and ultrasound imaging (with expanded evening options for mammography); private and semi-private infusion rooms; medical nutrition by a registered dietician; a bistro with Starbucks coffee, smoothies and light refreshments; and patient navigation and oncology social work services.

About Hamilton Medical Center

The flagship affiliate for Vitruvian Health's Northwest Georgia region, Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) is a 255-bed regional acute-care hospital that offers major medical, surgical and diagnostic services, including accredited stroke and chest pain centers. Advanced technology and wellness are two significant areas of focus for HMC. Services include the freestanding Hamilton Ambulatory Surgery Center, Hamilton Diagnostics Center, and Bradley Wellness Center, as well as a Level II trauma center, Peoples Cancer Institute, Heart & Vascular program (including open heart surgery), Hamilton Spine Health and Sport, Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and more.

About Vitruvian Health

Vitruvian Health, formerly Hamilton Health Care System, is a not-for-profit, fully integrated health system serving the Northwest Georgia and Southeast Tennessee regions. Vitruvian includes Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton, Ga., and Bradley Medical Center in Cleveland, Tenn., affiliated physician practices, walk-in care centers, retirement and skilled nursing centers, a diagnostic center, a cancer institute, an institute for children with developmental delays, and more. Known for its advanced care and personalized service, Vitruvian Health offers innovative treatment options in state-of-the-art facilities while maintaining a compassionate, friendly and tranquil healing environment.

The Vitruvian name draws from the organization's recognizable da Vinci-inspired Vitruvian Man icon, which has been a prominent part of Hamilton's logo since 1976. Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man represents harmony, balance, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of health, perfectly aligning with Hamilton's integrated system of care.