



Vitruvian Health

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INFORMATION

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More than a wig

DALTON, Ga. (October 22, 2025) – Kara Gray was scared when she learned at age 39 that she had an aggressive form of breast cancer requiring immediate treatment. What haunted her most was the thought of losing her signature look — her long, blonde hair.

“I can feel however I feel on the inside, but however I look on the outside is how other people see me,” said Gray, a dental assistant who lives in Chatsworth.

Gray’s journey began just over a year ago when she discovered a small lump that prompted her to visit her primary care physician and ask for a mammogram referral.

“It would have been easy to put it off, and we were short-staffed at work, but something in my mind said to not put this one off,” Gray said.

Her visit to [Peoples Cancer Institute](#) (PCI) at Hamilton Medical Center was marked by a series of events that led to the most important diagnosis of her life. The initial mammogram revealed an area that required a biopsy, which came back clean, but protocol dictates the biopsied area be marked with a small clip for future reference.

When Gray returned for a follow-up mammogram to ensure the pin had stayed in place, the technician accidentally included underarm tissue that wouldn’t normally be scanned. A close look at that area revealed a questionable lymph node – a discovery that changed everything. Soon after Gray left PCI, she received a call telling her to come back in.

Today, she is one of the approximately one in eight women who will experience breast cancer in their lifetimes. According to the American Cancer Society’s [Breast Cancer Facts and Figures 2024-2025](#), while the number of cases has increased in recent years, “The breast cancer death rate has dropped by 44 percent since 1989 because of advances in treatment and earlier detection.” The bottom line is early detection saves lives.

Gray's treatment and prevention journey has taken her through chemotherapy, radiation, a double mastectomy, a hysterectomy and an ongoing oral medication regimen she'll continue for several more months. For all the physical difficulties of treatment, the one aspect that hit hardest was the knowledge that she would lose her hair.

PCI's on-site cosmetology services, delivered by Stacey Gibson at [Boggs Boutique](#), were a key aspect of Gray's treatment. The boutique provides an array of services, such as consultations, emotional support haircuts, head shaving, and wig fittings.

"I could not have done this without her," Gray said. "She taught me how to put on eyelashes when I didn't have eyelashes. She cut my hair into a pixie cut when my hair first started coming out, and prior to doing that, she color matched a wig for me so it wouldn't be so obvious to the outside world. She washed my wig when it needed it and was just so kind and loving."

Gibson didn't stop there. She listened to her, prayed with her, and helped her hold onto some sense of normalcy as her body underwent the fight of her life.

Beyond her care team at PCI, Gray found hope through the support of her family. She and her husband have two sons in their teens and early 20s. She continued working throughout treatment, a decision she said helped her stay positive even though she knew she was facing something scary.

"Not being by myself got me through it," Gray said. "I continued to work. The weekends were the hardest, when I was by myself, when I was just sitting at home thinking 'I'm sick, I'm sick, I'm sick, I'm sick.'"

Her last radiation treatment was in July. Now, she sees her remission as a testament to the hope and healing that is possible with the right support.

"Everyone at Peoples Cancer Institute went above and beyond," Gray said.

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Photos:

Kara Gray today.

Kara Gray with a wig.

About Peoples Cancer Institute

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

PCI includes: board-certified medical oncologists; radiation oncologists and surgeons; 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; private and semi-private infusion rooms; medical nutrition by a registered dietitian; a bistro with Starbucks coffee 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, Peeples 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.