

Barbara Ginesi, a patient care navigator in the St. Joseph Hospital Mammography department, claims that “being able to help patients” is the best part of her job. “I thrive in solving situations,” she says.

With eight years in her role, Barbara was one of the hospital’s first patient care navigators. She thinks of herself as, “a patient advocate – a voice for patients when they need me to be.” Barbara adds, “What I love about working at St. Joseph Hospital is the feeling of being allowed to take time with patients, to sit down and talk with the family and sometimes to pray with them without having to ask, ‘Is what I’m doing okay (with my employer)?’”

Barbara starts each day in prayer, asking to be His vessel for those who need her, and to be an example to others. As her Values in Action Award for Justice attests, this prayer has been granted.

Attends to the needs and advocates for people who are vulnerable and in need.

Breast Imaging Manager Florette Grado describes her employee as “the first person to try to help our patients.” She continues, “It often begins with the patient’s first panicked phone call. They found a lump, have no insurance, no doctor, what do they do? Barbara reaches out to them and very patiently calms them down. She begins to unravel their problems and addresses each and every one of their needs and concerns. If they need to see a doctor because they have no order, she finds one. If they need insurance or could be a candidate for the ‘Every Woman Counts Program’ she helps get them enrolled. If they need a ride here, she helps secure one. A shoulder to cry on, she’s there. An appointment tomorrow, she finds one. She’s the perfect ‘Patient Care Navigator.’

“Barbara has been known to skip her breaks, take late lunches and stay after her shift is over to finish helping her patient. Whatever it takes, Barbara is willing to do. If it means holding their hands, praying with them, crying with them, buying them gifts (oftentimes out of her own pocket) or visiting them in the hospital on her day off, she is there. She is always there to support them through their very scary and very emotional

times. She gives me such peace of mind knowing the level of care our patients are receiving. She is a ‘Breast Care Angel.’”

Barbara finds that a common problem women face is job discrimination because of their treatment. “We had a patient who was in the midst of chemotherapy and doing exams on her lunch hour, and her employer told her she was taking off too much time,” she sadly recalls. To help such patients, Barbara often facilitates letters from the physicians and does her best to arrange scheduling so that their responsibilities are less impacted.

Is enthusiastic in calling others to work together to understand, serve the needs and improve the health of our communities.

“It’s an amazing feeling to see how our community of employees comes together for our patients,” states Barbara. A recent example is “Geraldine,” a lady who called to schedule a mammogram.

Florette recalls, “The patient said she was very scared and nervous and had a lump in her breast. Barb calmed her down and scheduled her, assuring her that we would be very gentle. When she arrived she shared with Barb that she was homeless and living in her boyfriend’s car. She was checked in and brought to the waiting area. Geraldine took two of the complementary packages of crackers and said she was sorry, but that she was hungry. Barbara said no problem, help yourself. She was taken aback by how humble this patient was and that she hadn’t taken a handful of crackers. Barbara shared this with our staff and me. Before Geraldine left the staff prepared a goody bag of food from their own lunches to give to her.

“This patient needed to have a core biopsy. Barbara scheduled her, calmed her down and called her physician’s office for authorization. The biopsy was positive for breast cancer and now Barbara began the task of finding a breast surgeon who would take MSI insurance. Barbara found a surgeon and arranged the consultation for our patient. Barbara then walked her over to our MDC clinic, introduced her to everyone and assured her that everything would be okay.

“Later that evening, Barbara was at her prayer group and shared her story about the patient. Her friend went to her car and gave Barb a blanket, clean wipes and two McDonald gift cards. Barb gathered the goodies and on her way home stopped to buy her

a \$30 phone card so we could stay in touch with her. At the same time the entire mammography department was gathering food, money and gift cards to help our little lady.”

Contributes to a work environment that supports the integrity of our mission, values and vision with a shared sense of purpose.

Florette continues, “Geraldine was scheduled for surgery, and the staff at the MDC helped her get her medications and a place to go to recuperate after her surgery and radiation. There was still one more problem. Before surgery she had to have a shower. Our patient was very worried about this and Barbara called me to ask if she could work on this. Of course I said yes. After many attempts within Main OR and Pavilion OR, a shower was arranged, but someone had to meet the patient at 5 am to check her in, escort her to the show and clean up the shower after she was done. Barbara volunteered to come in on her own time. I agreed to let her do this, but only if she clocked in. She felt good about helping and about fulfilling the values of our ministry.”

Barbara lights up when she talks about Geraldine, who has put on weight since she came to the Center at 80 pounds, has a good health outlook and has been placed in a home. In fact, Geraldine recently told Barbara she wanted to volunteer at the hospital, and Barbara put her in touch with the Volunteer Services.

Behaves ethically, with integrity, honesty and confidentiality in dealing with others.

Patient confidentiality is more than a legality for Barbara. “I’m often called to have courageous conversations with patients. They need to feel they can confide in me. It’s a matter of trust,” she says.

When a college professor who has a history of breast cancer needs to come in, Barbara knows it can be traumatic for her. And unless Barbara is there to come alongside, she will reschedule her appointment.

It’s important to Barbara that all of our patients are treated equally, regardless of their situations. “We embrace them all with love and respect,” she says. “That is our way of carrying out the Sisters’ mission.”

Summary

Barbara feels that her life experiences prepared her to be a “conduit for compassion and justice” for patients at SJO. Her mother is a 10-year breast cancer survivor, who raised her daughter with practical examples of helping the downtrodden. “I want to be there for patients like I’d want someone to be there for my mom,” she shares.

Through her church, Barbara attended a Caring Evangelism course to become better attuned to those in her care. “I learned to be prepared for what you’ll hear, and to not be afraid of what you may be called to do,” she says.

Florette volunteers, “Due to our workforce reduction, Barbara has had to expand her role to include responsibilities such as patient check-in, helping to answer an increasing volume of phone calls, and assuming the role of primary scheduler for patient procedures and breast localizations. Even with the intensity of her workload, she never forgets the reason she is here and her dedication and commitment to our patients.”