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Daryl Cole: 706-272-6168

John Judge: Cancer doesn't have to be so scary

DALTON, Ga. (October 21, 2024) – For years, John Judge has prayed easily and often, reaching out to encourage everyone in his sphere.

But now, he uses his recent battle with prostate cancer as a springboard for sharing hope and encouragement, building friendships, exuding gratitude and pointing people to something bigger than themselves.

“Just because you hear the word ‘cancer,’ it’s not an end all,” Judge said. “It’s how you look at things. It’s perspective. Don’t look at your feet. Keep looking up. God has written your life perfectly. He walks with you. He places people there with you.”



Judge was treated at Peoples Cancer Institute (PCI) at Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton, from January 2023 to March 2023, receiving radiation treatments five times a week. His cancer was discovered thanks to bloodwork that flagged problems in late 2022 and compelled his doctor to order a biopsy.

“The doctor came in and basically said, ‘I’m not going to beat around the bush. You have cancer,’” said Judge, a Calhoun, Ga., resident who is now in remission.

Not wanting to worry his wife, who was with him, Judge injected humor into the situation and assured her it would be OK. He would research available treatment options, he said.

The type of treatment he decided on could have been performed at a large teaching hospital, but getting into one meant meeting strict requirements around his diagnosis and prognosis. His efforts were denied, so he opted for another type of radiation treatment.

“I continued my search and ended up at Peeples,” Judge said.

With Dr. Arif Ali and his team providing care, Judge soon learned several of the professionals at PCI had the same background and experience as his first choice. He immediately felt he was in the right place.

“I didn’t have to travel five days a week from Calhoun and fight traffic,” Judge said. “I only had to travel approximately 25 miles north to go to Dalton.”

During his treatments, Judge arrived at PCI 45 minutes before his 8:15 a.m. appointment. He enjoyed visiting with two other gentlemen who had treatments at about the same time. “We felt like the three amigos,” he said.

Spurred on by the encouragement of their care teams, Judge and his friends began relaying that same encouragement to other cancer patients, sharing prayers, faith and an abiding trust that God would carry them through and that they were in the right place for the right reason.

A year later, Judge still returns to PCI to visit with friends and encourage current patients.

“For me, it’s still a joy to be able to go by and see the staff and some of the newer patients and still pray for them,” he said. “Everybody that is there has so much compassion in their heart. They’re being God’s hands and showing the love they have for people by what they do. To me, it’s amazing.”

Judge and his wife Renee moved to Calhoun from Florida in 2016. He is now retired after working more than 30 years in the pest control industry as well as 14 years as a store manager of a large drug store chain. He and his wife write a weekly devotional they send out to a community of subscribers.

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Photo: John Judge