



Sandy's story

“I feel stronger and healthier than I have in my entire life.”

Sandra Mascari-Devitt (center), pictured with Mercyhealth partners Sam Gnatzig (left), and Julia Green (right).

As both the Mercyhealth Breast Health Patient Navigator and a grade 3, stage III breast cancer survivor, I understand that excess weight increases a woman's risk for breast cancer recurrence in women who have been previously diagnosed. Unfortunately, I gained 45-plus pounds during my breast cancer treatment. Those years were like pushing a huge boulder up a very steep hill. Even small progress seemed to be lost. My overweight body was putting me at risk. Then, I began to advocate for my future and myself. This wasn't about fitting into smaller jeans. This was about watching my grandchildren grow up. My goal was to simply get back to the weight I was before I was diagnosed with breast cancer. At first, my body did not cooperate. My metabolism was shot. The low-calorie diet and exercise were not working. Then I met two incredible women: Mercyhealth nutritionist and dietitian, Julia Green, and Mercyhealth exercise physiologist, Sam Gnatzig. They provided tremendous encouragement and support over the last year and continue to help me today. I find myself excited to see what new things Julia will help me learn. She has patience and works with me to have patience in my journey. Sam is a powerhouse. I've had limitations due to treatment side effects, so Sam found ways to work around them. I've lost 75 pounds since the start of my journey. I feel stronger and healthier than I ever have in my entire life. Most importantly, I feel empowered. I owe that empowerment mainly to Julia and Sam. I would encourage those who have struggled with their weight to reach out and meet them. I feel great! For the first time ever, I am on solid ground and able to meet the future head on.