



Evacuee Jean Davis Inspires With Her Story

Jean Davis is a wonder. This Katrina evacuee and grandmother of three, who discovered in the fall of 2006 that she has breast cancer, is nevertheless among the most upbeat women one could possibly meet. And grateful.

She is tremendously grateful. "I have been blessed to find people who really care," she said. "One of them I call 'my angel,' Cathy, who went far out of her way to help me when I was sheltered in Aimee, Louisiana, about 300 miles from my home in New Orleans. Others are Christine and Monica and the rest of the staff at [The Rose](#), who I call 'my family.'"

An important distinctive of The Rose, and part of what makes it truly comprehensive, is its patient navigation system. Seed funding for that system came in 1999 from St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities, the largest charity in the Houston area devoted solely to health, which in April of 2007 is celebrating its 10th anniversary. During its 10 years, The Charities has awarded \$66 million to programs throughout 30 counties of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. These programs have touched the lives of 10 million individuals, carrying out the mission of the organization to reach the medically underserved—body, mind and spirit.

Ms. Davis's journey from New Orleans to Houston included stops not only in Aimee but in California and Dallas. But it was in Houston that she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I had pain and discharge from my breast, so I knew I just had to see a doctor—even though I had no insurance and had to scrape up the money myself," she explained. "After examining me and suspecting a major problem, he recommended The Rose to me as a place I could receive full diagnosis. I brought what money I could to my mammography appointment at The Rose, but rather than tell me how much I had to pay, they asked, 'How much can you pay?' Later, I received some of my care at no cost at all." With two locations in the Houston area, at the corner of Westchester and Bissonnet in Southwest Houston and off IH-45 in South Houston, The Rose is perhaps the most comprehensive breast healthcare provider in Houston.

"Many organizations support routine screening mammograms for women who meet low income, uninsured criteria, but what happens when the screening mammogram is positive?" asked Dorothy Weston Gibbons, co-founder and CEO. "Fourteen different screening groups refer to us, and The Rose is the only place in our area that provides everything from education and outreach to screening mammography, diagnostic to support services at no charge to working poor, low-income, uninsured. The fact that we serve many who are able to pay permits us to assist those without means of paying." Nearly 25 percent of Texans and 32 percent of Houstonians do not have health insurance. Houston has the highest rate of uninsured of all major metropolitan areas in the nation.

"The St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities grant was what made our navigation system happen," said Ms. Gibbons. "We now have three staff members devoted to helping clients locate and receive needed services. And now The Charities is helping us establish a site on the Internet that will allow women to

www.projectsafetynet.net www.breasthealthtexas.org www.slehc.org



explore all the area resources available to them. Our Breast Health Collaborative of Texas is developing a web site called the Breast Health Resource Mapping Project and is modeled on The Charities' [Project Safety Net](#), a site that gives users details about a wide range of health providers in the Houston area.”

Monica Garcia, one of the patient navigators at The Rose, explained that her job is to take a client through the whole process.

“As navigators, we may visit the client’s home to learn more about her clinical and family situation, go to doctors’ appointments with her, and help with anything she needs,” she said. “Each woman’s experience is unique, and that’s what molds the process.” The Rose provided not only its diagnostic services but also its navigation and support services to Ms. Davis.

“Christine and Monica would call me often to ask me how I was doing and what I needed. They gave me lots of literature on cancer, helped me get on Medicaid, made sure I got to my appointments, and showered my family with food and Christmas gifts. The Rose has been a godsend to me!”

Since being diagnosed at The Rose, Ms. Davis has received chemotherapy treatments—infusions she calls “red devil juice”—and is now awaiting her April surgery date.

“The chemotherapy has already reduced the size of the lumps in my breast, and if all goes well, they will shrink more in the next month so that I’ll be prepared for the surgery,” she said.

Ms. Davis and her fiancé plan to be married “sometime soon, when I’m ready to set the date,” and they have plans to purchase a home in Houston in the near future. She has worked for years as a certified nurse assistant—both in a nursing home and on private duty—and she is eager to become more active again.

“I hope I can get back to work after my surgery,” she said. “I’m not one to sit at home, but in the meantime I’m glad to tell my story to anyone who is interested. That’s how grateful I am to The Rose and all the people who have been so loving to me.” To learn more about St. Luke’s Episcopal Health Charities, visit www.slehc.org.