

# Vicky Lunsford is Alive and Well and Working at Oroville Hospital



Vicky Lunsford is a breast cancer survivor. She was diagnosed 13 years ago, while completing her vocational nursing studies. She received treatment at Oroville Hospital, recovered, and not only did she go on to earn a Registered Nurse (RN) degree on top of her vocational license (LVN), Vicky gained a fresh appreciation of her profession and her hospital.

"I love being at Oroville Hospital—I love it. They have been so good to me," Vicky says, adding that when she was ill, "I didn't need a support team; I had my own."

Vicky grew up in Southern California and married her high school sweetheart, Michael, who served in the Navy. They moved to the North State, and while he was stationed overseas, she opened a T-shirt shop in Paradise.

At the urging of a friend, Vicky took an assessment exam for Butte College, and while studying biology, she felt the call of nursing. "Sold the store, and here we are," she says.

Well, it wasn't quite that easy. Along with the academic rigors and challenges inherent with raising three sons, Vicky also had cancer to conquer.

She got an inkling of her illness while studying oncology. The instructor passed out copies of X-rays and mammograms for the nursing students to examine. What she saw, then heard in the lecture, hit home.

Vicky suspected she might have breast cancer.

"I knew instantly that's what was going on," she says. "But I decided to ignore that fact because I figured it was slow-growing and I just had a couple of months to go to get my LVN. When I actually went and got my mammogram, that's when we found the lump."

She shakes her head at the delay. "At that point in time I figured that two more months wouldn't matter," she says. "But actually it would. If I had jumped on it right away ..."

She underwent a modified radical mastectomy (in which a physician removed breast tissue and lymph nodes) and a six-month "slam" of intense chemotherapy.

"I was terrified, just terrified," she says. "And my husband, he was devastated—and the kids were all upset. They didn't know what to do. 'Mom is never sick.' This was really the first time I was really sick in my whole life."

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"Everybody I worked with, they were all so supportive—I mean SO supportive," Vicky says. "People in this hospital and in this community need to know that the people here, they are there for you."

"One time I thought there was a chance that the cancer had come back, and Dr. Chandy was going to postpone his vacation. I got an appointment just before Christmas. It was my gift that year, to have a procedure and the biopsies done—and they all came back negative."

Vicky's time as a patient at Oroville Hospital taught her much about cancer, and she shares those lessons with others. "I told myself, 'If God let me live, then whatever I went through, I'm going to teach,' I've kept that promise to this day," she says, "I just want to tell people that knowledge is power."

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Oroville Hospital

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