

## **Preventative Mastectomy and Self Breast Exams Can Saves Lives**

**CHARLESTON, SC--** One local breast cancer survivor says doing a self breast exam saved her life. Donna Racoske was diagnosed with Stage 4 Breast cancer in October 2003. Now in remission, she says if she had not performed a self breast exam she would not be here today.

Ms. Racoske underwent a routine mammogram in September in 2003, one month before her diagnosis. The results came clear, no cancer detection. One month later, she performed a routine self exam and found a lump. That lump ended up being stage 4 breast cancer. "It all happened so quick, I did not have time to think about it," says Ms. Racoske.

Racoske, a patient of Dr. Casey Fitts of Surgical Associates of Charleston, endured chemotherapy, radiation, and then decided to undergo a double mastectomy. The bilateral mastectomy was part preventative, as cancer had only been found in one breast. This decision is one many women make today, and the surgeons at Surgical Associates of Charleston perform routinely with expert precision. According to the National Cancer Institute, existing data suggest that preventive mastectomy may significantly reduce (by about 90 percent) the chance of developing breast cancer in moderate- and high-risk women.

According to the Breast Cancer Foundation, nearly 70% of all breast cancer is detected through self exams. Self exams should be performed routinely, and in conjunction with mammograms for women over the age of 40. Racoske believes if her story can help anyone catch this potentially deadly disease, it is worth telling. Says Racoske, "I would love to be an advocate for breast cancer prevention and help anyone else if I could."

Donna Racoske and Dr. Casey Fitts are available to talk to the media about the importance of self breast exams as well as the decision to have a bilateral mastectomy. If you are interested in covering this story, please call Laurin Collar with HHK Healthcare Marketing at 843-478-8494.