

# NEWS RELEASE

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System | Office of Communication & Outreach



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## **Breast Cancer Survivorship Program at NF/SGVHS Empowers Veterans to Thrive**

By Melanie L. Thomas, MBA, Public Affairs Officer



***Pictured in photo:** Army Veteran, Venus Pittman explains recent progress made to improve her diet and routine exercise plan with Staff Physician, Dr. Robert R. Carroll.*

The Breast Cancer Survivorship program at the [North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System \(NF/SGVHS\)](#) puts control back in the hands of Veterans undergoing breast cancer treatment. This innovative program seeks to minimize some of the most common side effects of cancer, while empowering and encouraging Veterans to remain physically active and practice healthy nutrition.

For Army Veteran, Venus Pittman the support she has received has been critical throughout her five-year journey with Breast Cancer.

“I was diagnosed (the first time) with stage IV breast cancer back in 2014 after having my fourth child. I noticed a lump while breastfeeding,” said Pittman.

After several years of chemotherapy, radiation, mastectomy and reconstructive surgery, Pittman thought that she had beat the breast cancer.

“In January of last year, I came in for a follow-up appointment after my reconstruction surgery and there was another lump. I didn’t think anything of it. I just thought that it was due to having the surgery,” said Pittman.

With the support of new-age technology, individualized education, imaging, lab and clinical surveillance and additional services to include nutritionists, physical therapists, psychiatrist, recreational therapist, and a whole health coach, Pittman feels that every aspect of her cancer care has been considered.

“VA takes good care of their women Veterans. Every aspect of my cancer treatment has been taken care of and I have no doubt that I’ll beat this thing again,” said Pittman.

“Being diagnosed with breast cancer can leave a person feeling out of control. Unfortunately, this may be fostered by focusing solely on the medical aspect of one’s diagnosis by being instructed about scans, labs, what type of treatment is recommended, and so on,” said Clinical Dietician, Dianne Piepenburg.

The Breast Cancer Survivorship program helps Veterans focus on aspects of their care that they can control, which improves their health and well-being according to Dr. Tejal Patel, Physical Therapist, NF/SGVHS.

“We are already making a positive impact on our breast cancer survivors, and we are just getting started,” said Patel. “Ultimately our end goal is to help them to, not only survive, but thrive throughout their cancer journey.”

For questions about how to enroll in the Breast Cancer Survivorship program, speak to your health care provider during your next visit or email: [Dianne.Piepenburg@va.gov](mailto:Dianne.Piepenburg@va.gov), [Tejal.Patel1@va.gov](mailto:Tejal.Patel1@va.gov), or [Danielle.Orr@va.gov](mailto:Danielle.Orr@va.gov).

### **About the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System**

NF/SGVHS is one of the nation’s leading VA healthcare systems employing more than 5,800 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing high quality care to Veterans residing throughout North Florida and South Georgia. The organization operates 14 facilities to include two medical centers located in Gainesville and Lake City, a domiciliary and clinics located throughout a 50-county service area.

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*“...to care for him who shall have borne the battle  
and his widow, and his orphan...”*  
- President Abraham Lincoln



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System**

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The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System is one of the nation's leading VA healthcare systems, employing more than 5,600 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing high quality care to Veterans residing throughout north Florida and south Georgia. The organization operates fifteen facilities to include two medical centers located in Gainesville and Lake City, and clinics located throughout a 50-county catchment area.

To learn more about the facilities and services offered by the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, please visit [www.northflorida.va.gov](http://www.northflorida.va.gov) or "like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/VANFSG>, or follow us on Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/VANFSG/>

For any questions about the content of this message, please contact the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Office of Public Affairs at 352-348-7130 or email [vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov).