

January 21, 2010

Hello, I am Suzanne Litzenberger. I was diagnosed with Papillary thyroid cancer a few days before my 25th birthday in 2004. My cancer was found during a routine visit to the gynecologist and I had no other health problems at the time. There was no history of thyroid cancer in my family, but my aunt who lives in Blair County (Altoona) is currently being treated for thyroid cancer.

My doctors at St. Luke's-Bethlehem were very thorough in my treatment and follow up. Even though my case was low risk, they treated it seriously. My survival rate is good due to my age, size of the tumors, and early detection. One of my concerns was whether this would affect my ability to have children and it did not, as I have a two year old son.

I have always wondered about the source of my thyroid cancer. I grew up in Clinton County and later moved to Lehigh County. According to the research, Lehigh County has the highest rate of thyroid cancer in the state and is also the county with the highest rate in the U.S. Clinton County is above the U.S. average.

The Lehigh Valley thyroid cancer support group that I am a member of (and two others in attendance today) was formed partly due to an article in the Allentown Morning Call focusing on prior research by the Radiation and Public Health Project regarding the rise in thyroid cancer rates in the state. We often discuss the possible sources of our cancer. Nuclear power plants have often come up in our conversations as well as other environmental factors. It would put our minds at ease to at least know why this happened and discover possible ways to prevent it in the future.