

Research



PENNSYLVANIA HEALTHCARE PROFILES

Gaining Back Health, Giving Back to Others

Extrovert and outdoorsman Tim Hipps can once again hit the open road, thanks to innovative cancer care and clinical research trials available through Penn State Cancer Institute.

“**T**he first word I heard was ‘cancer,’ and that word gives you the willies,” says Tim Hipps, a 60-year-old Hershey resident diagnosed with prostate cancer in June 2020.

With characteristic humor and optimism, Hipps chose to fight his cancer the way he’s always lived—with gusto and an eye toward helping others. So, he agreed to take part in a research study at Penn State Cancer Institute.

“If you can do something to help the next person who hears ‘cancer,’ you do it,” he says.

The clinical trial is investigating whether a shorter course of radiation treatments given at a higher dose proves more effective than the standard care plan for prostate cancer. Preliminary findings suggest the study’s hypothesis is correct: The shorter course may provide better improvement in long-term bladder function at two years and 30% improvement in the cure rate at five years.

In joining the trial, Hipps was randomly assigned to the standard of care—28 treatments, five days a week—still preferable to some other medical centers’ 44 treatment standard, he says.

Throughout radiation, he was monitored closely, and that care will continue with monthly, then annual, checkups.

The attention of a panel of medical professionals closely tracking patients enrolled in research studies may improve personal outcomes, but beyond that, it’s a way to help others who find themselves in similar shoes.

Study coordinator Jen Petrask met with Hipps during each visit, usually with Hipps’ doctor, to monitor any changes in his health or side effects from treatment.



ABOVE: Tim Hipps, his wife, Trudy (right), and their daughter, Tarrah Berrier, also known as The Turkey Lady at Lancaster Central Market, look forward to working together again now that Tim’s health is back on track.

“It seemed like everyone really cared about me personally,” Hipps says. “Everyone remembered my name. To a people person like me, that means a lot.”

The clinical trial staff often grows attached to the study participants. “Most of them, like Tim, start to feel like family, and we love being able to celebrate their last day of treatment by ringing the bell and following along with their entire journey,” Petrask says.

Out and About

Ever since his daughter, Tarrah Berrier, purchased The Turkey Lady at Lancaster Central Market in 2016, Tim and his wife, Trudy, have enjoyed helping her make it a success.

Tarrah and Trudy stock the stand and wait on customers while Tim tackles whatever tasks are at hand.

They banter back and forth, joking about who is the biggest boss, but, in reality, their unified spirit is the secret ingredient to their successful family recipe.

“I couldn’t work here for over a month during treatment, so I’m really happy to be back,” says Tim, who finished radiation treatments last spring and is now cancer-free. “I always enjoy talking to people and seeing their faces.”

His brush with cancer set him to work on his bucket list of fun, like viewing shows at Hershey Theatre, eating out more often, and taking more time to visit parks.

“I’m doing well because of the treatment I got at Penn State Health,” Hipps says. “Every morning, I enjoy seeing the sunshine and being above the grass, not below it. We all need to get busy living.”