

**TO ME, LIFE MEANS GIVING
VIRGINIA DAIGLE, VOA PATIENT**

I was a vivacious 52 year old when I was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2002. I underwent surgery and my tumor was removed. At the time, the good news was no sign of residual disease. About 2 years ago, I started coughing and experienced some slight pain. My doctor would soon tell me that the cancer had metastasized from my colon to my lung.

I was devastated. When I was referred to VOA by my family physician, I knew nothing about oncology. I had not received any treatment the first time around. When they told me that I had 2-5 years, it was like giving me a death sentence. I couldn't think any further than the things that I hadn't already seen. And I want to see them!

Dr. George was instrumental in coordinating my treatments. My husband and I have no insurance, but we still had options to explore. I am currently enrolled in a progressive Phase III study, offering a high-dose regimen. I agree that it is one of the best out there. PET and bone scans after the first 2 months of treatment showed marked shrinkage in tumor size comparative to the original. The results have been incredible.

Happily, I'm currently living through my second year of treatment. At this juncture, I no longer believe in 2-5 years. I decided that those numbers do not matter. It has been over 2 years! I attribute that, not only to my Christian beliefs, but also to the treatment options available at VOA.

I have a new sense of hope, and I owe this in part to the staff at VOA. They are always upbeat! Even when I am feeling down, they are very comforting. They are more like family than doctors and nurses. It is hard to describe the difference they have made in my life: I went from total devastation to looking to the future.

Today, it feels good to say that I feel like I am a normal person, like when I first started. I feel a sense of renewal. I'm living with a chronic illness, but I still consider myself a survivor. I talk to a lot of people with other cancers, and they have been living with their diseases for many years. Some of them are even working.

I appreciate life a lot more than I did before. I understand that it's short, and I know I have to live it – each day, to the fullest. If I have good results from this trial, or even if I do not have good results, I will feel better about helping someone else in the future. Right now, my focus is on my 3 granddaughters – ages 12, 11, & 7. Watching them grow up means more to me than anything. Fortunately, we live right next door to each other. I get to see them whenever I please, and I love it.