

Twila Garcia: A Success Story



Twila Garcia is Rosebud Sioux from South Dakota. In the 1960's she relocated to Denver, Colorado where she met and Married Robert Garcia. During their marriage they had two daughters; Lucy, 36, and Rosie, 25 who has been blind since an infant. Twila Garcia is Rosebud Sioux from South Dakota. In the 1960's she relocated to Denver, Colorado where she met and married Robert Garcia. During their marriage they had two daughters; Lucy, 36, and Rosie, 25 who has been blind since an infant

In 2006 she saw a flyer recruiting American Indian women to get their annual mammogram and met Native American Cancer Research (NACR) Native Sisters', Audrey Marshall and Rose Lee who are Navigators. Twila said, "I told them it was hard for me to go to Denver Medical Center Hospital to get my mammogram examination, and they invited me to have my mammogram done at NACR's office in the Mobile Mammogram Van...the experience was made so easy and with the help from the ladies they made it feel so comfortable for me and Rosie."

Twila continued to use the Mobile Mammogram Van services at NACR and in 2008 she receive a letter with the diagnoses of breast cancer. "When I first found out...I was so scared." Her husband Robert was right by her side during this time but suffered a fatal heart attack soon after her diagnoses. To make matters worse Twila had trouble connecting with services and getting into care. NACR Navigators started going to her appointments with her and asked a lot of questions. There seemed to be mass confusion within the health system about who was responsible for her treatment. Twila was signed up with the Colorado Indigent Care Program coverage before she was diagnosed with Breast Cancer but she was told to apply for Medicaid. When she applied for Medicaid she was initially denied. NACR along with the Women's Wellness Connection; re-opened the lines of communication and discussed her Medicaid options.

This resulted in an approval for her cancer treatment and care. Twila counted and 118 days later she got into care. Twila say's, "Why did take so long to get into treatment? I hope other women don't go through what I went through...I felt so alone, and scared. If it was not for the support I received from the staff at NACR, I don't know how I would have got through this entire experience." Her daughter Rosie stood by her mother's side and was with her for all her radiation treatments. Her grandson would often come in to her room and bring her a snack or just to lay with her during her chemotherapy. "That warmed my heart."

Twila became involved with the NACR Survival Support Group which meets monthly at the NACR Lakewood Office. She is also active in NACR projects, like the Native American Prevention of Obesity exercise projects and events. She has since completed her chemotherapy and radiation treatments, and has regular check ups every three months. Twila continues to be a volunteer for NACR and recently was a guest speaker at the Native American Cancer Education for Survivors (NACES) conference held in Denver Colorado in August 2009. When asked what she would tell other Native American women, she responded;

"Go have your mammogram, no matter how you feel about it! Don't be afraid, after all it is your own life you are saving."

