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**EXCELA HEALTH NURSE ALLAYS PATIENTS' FEAR OF CANCER,  
JOINS FLIP FLOP WALK AS TWO-TIME SURVIVOR**

**GREENSBURG, PA, October 4, 2013 ...** Kelly Long was surprised to learn she had breast cancer, the first time. Overcoming the disease twice was not in her plans. Now, as a two-time survivor, this registered nurse offers support to breast cancer patients by sharing her story with patients of Excelsa Health General Surgery.

In 1995, a 35-year-old Long learned she had breast cancer. The mother of two young children was working full time in Westmoreland Hospital's maternity center. Long's family history showed no evidence of the disease, and her diagnosis was described as a "fluke."

Long endured six chemotherapy and 35 radiation treatments for her cancer and continued to work full time.

"I needed everything to seem normal, so I kept working" said Long. "My husband was incredible during that time and my children were well-behaved. My coworkers became my second family and really provided support."

Eventually Long's doctors proclaimed her "disease free," but in 2012 she learned her battle with breast cancer was not over as she was diagnosed with a different form of the disease.

"It's all in how you look at it. I was numb at first, and I overthought everything, but then I snapped to it and thought about what it was I had to do to get better," Long explained. "I learned I can't change what happens, but I can change how I respond to it."

Long opted to have mastectomy with reconstruction; once again she is living cancer free.

Long's doctor throughout her diagnoses and treatments was Excelsa Health general surgeon Geoffrey Joseph, MD. About a year ago Long went into the office for a follow-up appointment and told the office manager she would be happy to offer support to breast cancer patients. The staff was permitted to hand out her phone number.

“The office manager told me she had an open position for a nurse available and asked if I was interested,” Long said. “I was torn leaving maternity care after 23 years, but I felt I would have the opportunity to share my story and experiences to help others in this new position. “

The Penn Township native now works at Excelsa Health’s General Surgery offices in Greensburg and Excelsa Square at Norwin, which is also home to a Women’s Center offering mammograms, bone density tests and biopsies. Long offers comfort to patients telling them she “was in that chair before,” and she knows how they feel. She tries to put them at ease right away and “gives lot of hugs.” Excelsa Health general surgeon Richard Payha, MD, also shares Long’s stories with his patients.

“To see me working and moving around helps patients see the light at the end of the tunnel. I’m proof that they can get through the storm,” said Long.

As a survivor and advocate for a cure, Long will participate in Excelsa Health’s Flip Flop Walk for Breast Cancer Awareness at Westmoreland Hospital on Wednesday, October 9 at noon. The first 200 participants will receive pink flip-flops; all participants will be entered into a drawing for a complimentary pedicure. The event is part of a series of walks at Excelsa Health campuses in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

To learn more about breast health services visit [www.excelahealth.org](http://www.excelahealth.org).