



Kathy and her husband, Danny

Meet Kathy

an FPP recipient

Kathy's Story

“Sometimes sick people don’t feel cared about or may feel forgotten. The [Fresh Produce Program] (FPP) made me feel like I wasn’t forgotten. The volunteers that dropped off food on my front porch didn’t just drop it off and run, they gave me a few minutes of conversation, of interaction. This gave me an outlet. I felt very isolated due to my sickness, since I couldn’t drive myself anywhere, I was essentially homebound. **This program gave me great hope.**”

From a young age, Kathy took on a caretaker role and understood the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. She was the youngest of two older brothers, both with Duchenne muscular dystrophy—relegating them to a wheelchair. She helped her parents take care of them, by helping her brothers move from one place to another or assisting dinner preparation for the family. Kathy recalls the lessons her mom instilled throughout these experiences, including eating foods like carrots and celery instead of cookies and milk.

These lessons carried on into adulthood, until she was diagnosed with B-cell lymphoma, a rare form of cancer. She lost everything, including her income. She was unable to drive due to recurring seizures and lacked the finances to secure affordable food. This left her both transportation-insecure and food-insecure, each one exacerbating the other. The news of her cancer truly hit her when her hair began falling out, “...that’s when I cried. I didn’t want the cancer or treatments to be in control of me; I wanted to be in control of it. Losing my hair felt like I was losing control.”

Through her chemotherapy appointments at Duke, Kathy was introduced to the Fresh Produce Program. Before the FPP, she describes eating a lot of canned goods. She lacked the energy to cook for herself and couldn’t go to the store. To Kathy, the FPP changed what little was in her control: what she could eat, even while unable to drive herself to a grocery store or food pantry. On a biweekly schedule, she received food deliveries from the FPP.

“I looked forward to it,” Kathy said. “The people were very kind and I really needed that food, everything is so expensive, groceries are so expensive. I really counted on them, waiting for them to come for my groceries since I couldn’t drive. It was a very hard time in my life, and this felt like a new social support network that I could rely on.”

Thank you for making stories like Kathy’s possible!