

# Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program

## Melissa Tiller

Melissa Tiller needed a colonoscopy, but wasn't sure where to turn. Her mom has been diagnosed with endometrial cancer and after further diagnosis is found to have Lynch Syndrome. Lynch is a hereditary disorder that increases your risk of certain types of cancer, particularly those of the colon. This means Melissa and her siblings are also at risk. At the same time that the diagnosis on her mom is made, Melissa has some unsettling symptoms, including blood in her stool. This is often a pre-cursor of colon cancer.

Melissa is a hard worker but lost her job at a non-profit in a poor economy. A former school teacher, she cashed out her retirement to stay afloat while she looked for a new job. She took two, but both part-time and neither offered insurance. Her case worker at Jordan Valley Health Center in Springfield knew of the CoxHealth Foundation program that offers free colonoscopies and made a call.

"I'm a single mom with no other support," says Melissa. "I didn't want to take on more financial burdens right now that I couldn't pay off in a year or two. The colonoscopy was going to cost four to five thousand dollars. When I learned I could get help, I nearly broke down in tears. It was just utter relief."

The Colorectal Cancer Prevention Fund was started to help provide screening colonoscopies for anyone in need. Individuals with symptoms, family history, a lack of insurance or other inability to pay will often forgo the preventative test rather than incur bills they can't afford. Not having the test allows pre-cancerous polyps that could have been removed to go unchecked, potentially allowing preventable cancer to begin. The Colorectal Cancer Prevention Fund provides the test at no cost, removing the barrier to care and hopefully stopping cancer in its tracks. The fund is the reason why Melissa says today her future is bright.

"The colonoscopy did find a polyp that has now been removed. The test came back with good news. I will keep monitoring my health, but thanks to this fund a huge weight has been lifted."

To donate to the Colorectal Cancer Prevention Fund or participate in the Color Rectal Awareness Party (CRAP), contact the CoxHealth Foundation at 269-7109 or you can donate online at [www.coxhealthfoundation.com](http://www.coxhealthfoundation.com).

