

PERIMETER PLASTIC SURGERY

# Three Sisters and a Surgeon



Kate Hegidio and her son

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**T**hree sisters. Three double mastectomies. Three cases of breast reconstruction. And one surgeon, “who tied us all together and steered us through,” says Courtney Beach, the oldest of the three and the first to have reconstructive surgery with Dr. Mark Deutsch of Perimeter Plastic Surgery.

Beach, 43, an Alpharetta elementary school assistant principal, was diagnosed with breast cancer in the spring of 2012. Her gynecologist had recommended a mammogram and MRI after her sister, Kate Hegidio, was diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma, the most common type of breast cancer.

While Hegidio had chemotherapy before undergoing surgery, Beach started with a double mastectomy and breast reconstruction. Deutsch had explained to her the different options, and Beach decided to go with a DIEP flap reconstruction. “That means we used her abdominal fat instead of implants to reconstruct her breasts,” says the physician.

“Courtney was a great candidate for this surgery,” adds Deutsch, one of only a handful of surgeons in the Atlanta area that performs the complex procedure. “And she had very good results.” He remembers that during one of her follow-up visits Beach mentioned her two sisters, who also had double mastectomies. Both had complications from an initial reconstruction with different doctors, and Deutsch took over their cases. Hegidio, 42, who recently moved to Salt Lake City and works as an HR manager for a logistics company, had significant scar tissue on her right breast, which the surgeon first released. He then put in a tissue

expander to make room for an implant.

The youngest of the three sisters, Kelly Price, 38, is a nurse at an Atlanta hospital. She didn’t have cancer but decided to do a prophylactic double mastectomy. For Price, Deutsch did a latissimus flap, which utilizes the latissimus muscle running along the upper back to reconstruct the breast. He also put in tissue expanders and later, implants.

Deutsch emphasizes that “it is absolutely critical to spend enough time with the patient before the surgery to understand what their goals are, so we can collectively come up with a plan that’s going to get them there.” It’s a team effort that paid off. “Dr. Deutsch took me from a very dark place where I was unhappy with my body, to a place where I can finally look in the mirror again,” says Hegidio, adding that she wouldn’t go anywhere else if she ever needed more plastic or reconstructive surgery. “He set the bar, and he set it high.”

Deutsch, for his part, will never forget the three sisters. “They are smart, kind, and focused on their goals,” says the surgeon. They had strong support from their families. “It was very satisfying to see their positive attitude come to fruition,” the doctor adds.

The sisters have some advice for women anxiously starting the journey of cancer surgery and reconstruction. “Don’t be afraid to ask a lot of questions,” Price says.

“It’s okay to be that annoying patient,” Beach seconds. “Go see as many doctors as you need to feel comfortable and informed.” Deutsch was the fourth surgeon that Beach interviewed. “And I’m so glad I found him,” she says with a smile. ✚



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