

## A Story of Survival

**A year after her breast cancer diagnosis, Jillian Anaya credits her Kaiser Permanente care team with saving her life. Pictured, left to right, Brandy Box-Noriega, MD; Jillian Anaya; and Nicole Hill, MD.**

Jillian Anaya, a new member to Kaiser Permanente, didn't think much of the persistent pain she felt in her left shoulder. She figured she strained it during her work as a professional photographer and artist.

But when the pain started traveling down her arm, she knew she needed to get it checked.

Her primary care doctor at Kaiser Permanente Fresno ordered an X-ray of her shoulder, which also revealed a mass in her left breast. Anaya, 46, was immediately sent for a mammogram, followed by a biopsy.

The call she received the next day changed her life: She had breast cancer.

"Everything happened so fast," she said. "But it's because of Kaiser Permanente that I'm alive."

### A Life-Changing Diagnosis

Her diagnosis came in June 2018. It was stage 4 breast cancer. Tests showed the disease had already metastasized, spreading to her lymph nodes and into her mediastinum — the part of the chest in between the lungs.

Despite the devastating news, Anaya said she was fortunate because of her new Kaiser Permanente Fresno care team. Oncology chief [Brandy Box-Noriega, MD](#), and surgeon [Nicole Hill, MD](#), took charge of her treatment. Kaiser Permanente Fresno is a National Cancer Institute Community Research Center and is accredited by the Commission on Cancer.

"For many women with stage 4 disease, treatment is unlikely to result in a cure," Dr. Hill said. "However, our multidisciplinary cancer team felt Jill was in a favorable category due to the fact that her metastatic disease was limited to her mediastinum only."

Dr. Box-Noriega said although Anaya faced a very advanced breast cancer, her care team decided to treat it aggressively.

She had 5 months of chemotherapy followed by a modified radical mastectomy. "That means removal of the left breast along with the lymph nodes under her arm," Dr. Hill explained. Anaya completed her treatment with radiation.

Less than a year later there is no sign of cancer.

“We were able to put her into a disease-free state and we intend to keep her that way,” Dr. Box-Noriega said.

### **Integrated High-Quality Cancer Care**

Anaya said her mother was also treated for breast cancer about 20 years ago at Kaiser Permanente Fresno. After seeing the care her mom received, Anaya knew it was what she wanted, too.

“Kaiser Permanente saved my mom,” she said. “And I have no doubt that I’m here because of Kaiser Permanente, too.”

She said the integrated, comprehensive care she received from her Kaiser Permanente team made treatment and recovery easier. Her doctors have her on an anti-hormone and new medication to protect her bones — advanced ways to stop the cancer cells if any survive and try to divide.

Anaya is back at work and doing well. She uses art to express what she’s been through and is working on a mixed-media graphic art piece that symbolizes her journey.

The art portrays a mythical Amazon woman. The belief is Amazon women were warriors who cut off their right breasts so they could better wield a bow or spear. Anaya says after her treatments for her stage 4 breast cancer, it’s a good reminder of how far she’s come. She too is a warrior.