

Brief History of the Komen Tissue Bank

The Susan G. Komen for the Cure® Tissue Bank at the Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center represents a revolutionary approach to breast cancer research. It is the first and only place in the world collecting healthy breast tissue from women *without* cancer. By understanding what normal breast tissue looks like, scientists in Indiana and around the world expect to pinpoint the changes that occur when cancer forms. Armed with this knowledge, the tissue bank and its leaders hope to speed the discovery of a cure and—ultimately—prevent breast cancer before it forms.

This amazing resource is truly born of Hoosier ingenuity and spirit. In the late 1990s, the federal government convened a group of breast cancer experts to determine what was required to accelerate progress against this vicious disease. The number one item on the list was the need to study healthy tissue samples. Still, no action was taken, primarily due to concerns that women without cancer would be unwilling to undergo a needle biopsy and other requirements of donation.

Among those who served on the initial federal advisory panel was Indiana patient advocate and breast cancer survivor Connie Rufenbarger. Dissatisfied by years of inaction, Connie urged Indiana University oncologist Anna Maria Storniolo and IU surgeon and chemist Susan E. Clare to help make this bold vision a reality. The first women donated breast tissue in 2006. The bank took on its current name in 2007 in recognition of generous support from Susan G. Komen®. The tissue bank is celebrating its 10 year anniversary throughout 2017.

Today, more than 4,000 women—ranging in age from 18 to 92—have selflessly contributed healthy breast tissue. These precious samples have been utilized by investigators here in Indiana, as well as by internationally acclaimed scientists everywhere from the Mayo Clinic and Dana Farber Cancer Institute to the Royal Marsden Cancer Centre in London. Researchers must agree to share their data with the world, so others can build on their findings.

The Komen Tissue Bank is truly one-of-a-kind. It provides mothers, daughters, sisters and friends with an opportunity to battle back against a disease that affects far too many women.