



ESCALADA FLORAL FANTASY DRESS, IPPOLITA SMALL SILVER BANGLE AND LARGE SILVER BANGLE, IPPOLITA BLUE AND WHITE STONE NECKLACE, DAVID YURMAN GOLD AND SILVER COCKTAIL RING, SAKS FIFTH AVENUE



SHARON T. WILKS, M.D.

Doctor / Visionary

A self-described “prevention gal,” oncologist and hematologist Sharon T. Wilks has led the way in local breast cancer research, screenings and outreach since touching down at Lackland Air Force base in the mid-1980s.

Now treating patients at Cancer Care Centers of South Texas, Dr. Wilks originally came to San Antonio as a doctor training with the U.S. Air Force. Today she is best known for founding the Alamo City Cancer Council. The coalition of nonprofits dealing with breast cancer issues represented the first time any of the several stakeholders had come together to benefit their common cause. “I discovered there were a lot of organizations that were doing an enormous amount of special things for people who were diagnosed with breast cancer,” says Wilks of her early breast cancer advocacy days. “There was a lot of duplicate work going on, so I thought by bringing them together, we could pool our limited resources.”

By focusing on what needs *none* of the groups were meeting, the council was able to create an annual forum for breast cancer patients and advocates to discuss the latest medical knowledge. The group also publishes and distributes free booklets in both English and Spanish that are full of information for patients newly diagnosed with breast cancer, lymphoma, ovarian, lung or colorectal cancers, another first in San Antonio’s cancer community.

Through her work, Wilks has successfully opened San Antonio to national medical trials for breast cancer patients and at Lackland was responsible for providing the first free mammograms to female military members stationed at the city’s bases.

Wilks remains something of a pioneer outside the bounds of her job. Though not an avid WNBA fan at the time, she was asked to attend meetings garnering support for a WNBA team in San Antonio. When she heard the WNBA was particularly interested in supporting breast cancer awareness and education and general women’s health issues, Wilks’ ears perked up. She immediately forged a tight relationship with the Silver Stars team that continues to this day, as both a charter season ticket holder and a point person for the team’s breast cancer advocacy efforts.

The ground floor seems to be a comfortable place for Wilks, who infuses her medical career with a gutsy entrepreneurial spirit. Wilks acknowledges, “Because there is no framework, I’m able to create really novel things.” — *Callie Enlow* ★