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# Judy Willis: Advocate for Colorectal Cancer Screening

**LOCATION (DATE**) - Does a good family health history, consistent exercise and a healthy diet make colorectal cancer screenings unnecessary? Judy Willis thought so, but she was proved wrong.

In her role as director of care coordination at Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc., Willis promotes cancer screenings as a presenter of *Understanding Cancer* workshops, which provide education on cancer prevention, screenings, treatment and resources to groups and individuals in the community. She also encourages her friends and family to get screened.

Willis knew the screening recommendations but did not schedule her first colonoscopy until she was 63 years old. She had always known it needed to be done, but she dreaded the preparation that takes place the day before the screening. Willis did not have a screening done until a friend and fellow workshop presenter emphasized the lifesaving capabilities of colorectal cancer screenings.

The first time she was screened, she had pre-cancerous polyps that the doctor was able to remove. Five years later at the age of 68, she had another colonoscopy that was clear. Now, she does not have to repeat the screenings unless she has related health issues.

Willis is glad she did not wait longer to be screened. “The prep is a minor inconvenience when weighed against the possibility of the cancer it is designed to detect,” Willis said.

Willis encourages people who are hesitant to be screened to do it because her screening revealed pre-cancerous polyps, despite her healthy lifestyle.

“It's so important because it could save your life, and it's worth the trouble and inconvenience,” Willis said. “I felt that I followed a healthy lifestyle and had no risk factors, so I was not expecting anything to be found. I was wrong!”