While his friends at Olathe North High School played varsity baseball, attended prom and fretted over SAT scores, James Wade battled cancer.

Just 17, James was diagnosed with cancer of the salivary gland after noticing an odd bump behind his left ear. Removing the tumor required a six-hour surgery at The University of Kansas Hospital. “I was thinking this was no big deal,” Wade said. “But suddenly I was trying to fit 33 radiation treatments into my schedule of classes, homework, baseball ... I had to give up playing, which was tough. But I helped coach the younger teams.”

Navigators ease the way
Along the way, Dorothy Austin, RN, entered his life. A nurse navigator for The University of Kansas Cancer Center, she coordinates all aspects of care for head and neck cancer patients from diagnosis through survivorship. She readsies documents for patient appointments, answers questions, offers reassurance and encouragement, locates resources and provides emotional support for patients and their loved ones – every step of the way. And that connection is for life.

“I love my patients and really like being able to make a difference in their cancer journey,” Austin said. “I lost my mother to cancer, so I know how hard it is, not just on the patient but the whole family.”

Region’s largest program
With 12 disease-specific nurse navigators and seven intake coordinators led by Teri Banman, RN, The University of Kansas Cancer Center has one of the most extensive nurse navigator programs in the U.S. In 2011, a leadership gift from Tom and Teresa Walsh established the program, which grew steadily. Another major Walsh gift in 2013 doubled the number of navigators. Only a few weeks later, Teresa was diagnosed with cancer, and Austin has served as nurse navigator during her care and recovery. (Read Teresa’s story at kucancercenter.org/Walsh.)

Other generous donors include Joe and Jean Brandmeyer, the Allen J. and Gloria Block Family Foundation, the Gerson Family Foundation and Treads & Threads benefit for cancer care.

As for Wade, he is now 23, cancer-free for six years and a graduate of Ottawa University. Back in the game, he will catch in the bullpen for the T-Bones for his second year this summer.

And through Austin’s encouragement, he has taken up public speaking to share his remarkable cancer story with high school students and other groups.

You can help
You can double the impact of your gift to the nurse navigator program through a matching grant (up to $100,000) from the Gerson Family Foundation. Contact Courtney Johanning, 913-588-4704 or cjohanning@kumc.edu, to learn more.
The University of Kansas Cancer Center is among the nation’s leaders in pioneering personalized care, an emerging approach expected to revolutionize cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment in coming years.

“Personalized care involves studying the patient’s cancer at the molecular and cellular levels to determine which therapy is best to kill those cells,” said Terry Tsue, MD, cancer center physician-in-chief. Based on genetic, cellular and immunological information, physicians and researchers determine targeted therapies and individualized treatments the patient most likely will respond to successfully.

Sometimes called “precision medicine,” personalized care is considered the future of medicine by the National Cancer Institute. Pinpointing the diagnosis and tailoring treatment potentially results in faster treatment delivery, fewer side effects, less emotional distress for patients and families, reduced expense – and better outcomes.

**Treating the whole person**
The other key aspect of personalized care, Tsue stressed, is “treating the whole person, not just the tumor.” This includes educating patients about their specific condition and treatments, reducing stress, promoting a positive attitude, managing side effects and symptoms, maximizing nutrition and supporting patients, their loved ones and caregivers throughout the cancer journey and beyond.

Toward this end, the cancer center provides an array of patient support services, from nurse navigators to an accredited appearance center to survivorship programs.

**NCI designation means 25% higher survival rate**
The University of Kansas Cancer Center is the region’s only NCI-designated Cancer Center. For our patients, this means substantially increased chances of survival: Patients at NCI-designated centers average a 25 percent higher survival rate, compared to patients elsewhere.

To learn more about our nationally recognized cancer program, with expert care at more than a dozen facilities across the Kansas City area, visit kucancercenter.org.

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The University of Kansas Cancer Center is launching highly personalized patient appointment and treatment guides. This unique patient support service is not available elsewhere.

Print on demand, one-of-a-kind guidebooks are created for each patient. A nurse navigator enters information online, and a personalized guide ships to the patient overnight. Through a pilot program partnership with Uhlig LLC, the disease-specific guides are produced at no cost to the cancer center or patients.

The Patient Resource Appointment Guide arrives before the first appointment. It includes a welcome from the patient’s nurse navigator, appointment information, checklists, questions to ask, maps, directions and more.

The Patient Resource Treatment Guide – even more comprehensive at 140-plus pages – arrives after the patient’s diagnosis. It includes photos and bios of the patient’s physician, care teams and support staff; explanations of tests, treatment drugs and therapies the patient will receive, with details on side effects; messages of hope from survivors of the patient’s type of cancer; extensive support resources and more.

Appointment guides are now created for the majority of new patients at the Richard and Annette Bloch Cancer Care Pavilion in Westwood, Kan. Treatment guides are available for patients with lung, breast and head and neck cancers.

For more information, contact Teri Banman, RN, at tbanman@kumc.edu.