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Friends give appeal a helping hand

The League of Friends of South Tyneside Hospitals has given a £5,000 boost to the fundraising campaign for equipment to detect breast cancer in local women at an earlier stage.

Dr Sally Athey, Consultant Radiologist with South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, who approached the League for a contribution, said: "This is a tremendous donation and we're very grateful indeed for it. I was overwhelmed when they told me how much they were prepared to give."

The Tomosynthesis machine, which uses 3D imaging technology, costs £270,000. Since fundraising began last year, about £185,000 has been raised and Dr Athey expects the full total will be reached later this year. The machine will be used at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Gateshead, which provides breast screening services for patients in South Tyneside, Sunderland and parts of Durham, as well as Gateshead.

Dr Athey, who is based at South Tyneside District Hospital but also works at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, added: "Mammogram pictures are normally two dimensional but the new machine will give us 3D pictures, more like a hologram, of the whole of the breast. This will enable us to spot breast cancer at an earlier stage, which makes treatment more effective. It will also allow us to establish whether the tissue is normal without having to put the patient through further, unnecessary procedures."

Maureen Young, Chair of the League of Friends, said: "When Dr Athey asked if we could help to buy the new machine we felt it was so important to give some money as it will be of great benefit to South Tyneside women."

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Pictured above: Consultant Radiologist Dr Sally Athey, second from right, and breast screening superintendent Janet Cumiskey, third from right, receiving the £5,000 donation from the League of Friends of South Tyneside Hospitals

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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