

Community Connections



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

From The Director's Desk

Issue 9, December 2020

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

We've made it! It is hard to believe that December is here and the end of 2020 is drawing near.

It would be an understatement to call 2020 one of the most challenging years we have collectively experienced. Still, as we celebrate the holiday season and welcome in a new year, we reflect on the successes that have been achieved in spite of the challenges.

Indeed, the essential nature of our work has been highlighted this year as we delivered essential services to our communities. Each of you have played a role in overcoming the obstacles to ensuring that the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement continued to meet its mission of eliminating cancer disparities.

I am extremely proud of our office, our staff and community partners for numerous reasons. I am thankful to work with such dedicated professionals



who are committed to our mission of providing quality, evidenced -based outreach, education and research program.

For example, this month marks the beginning of a year of celebration as the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement marks its 25th anniversary. Stay tuned for more details as we announce a series of activities to commemorate our silver anniversary and highlight our past, discuss our

present work and preview what lies ahead in the years to come.

Lastly, as we spend time with loved ones this season, please remember to be mindful of pandemic precautions to stay safe. Also, take time to enjoy the season and prepare for the promising future that lies ahead.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

– Claudia

O'NEAL COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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December Health Awareness Review

p p c c f s w g v g m i l w r m v w m x o h o d
p r o s t a t e s p e c i f i c a n t i g e n i
n c y t o u o u s n n t v t v h b b x n h p h y
b n i s x c n o e b w c t p m h a l p g t y g c
i m r e h s f s p h y c h e y t t x f a y c o h
b u u t s v t l g h t s m h s g v s n y u u b c
d u g p a u o d o n y b n r a p d s t r e f o d
y i y a o g s u h w i s t m y n l w m g u o t n
l o g p d o l d g e d n i b f w o n n r v w s i
b y n i i n m c f o h o e c c x n t v l n y t m
x i h b t v u c p y h b s e a y c e o e g a v i
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u g a n t p v r u m l h t t s t s c s p i c c h
r w v m m f w y e f g o a d v l u r t c c c c u
u o b v m t o f c c b h n d t m l t a i s w r o
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o c c w n p g i f e d a p o s v f c p t u i m n
t e u a m p m r d a d h l l v c p y n t i g t o
c x r g b h u l a y o f v e g p o d o s h d e y
c y t i s e b o n m v b b b x d x p g e h m y r
n l v y w a c s g x v e g m l a p i y p m w m h
w e e p v d r f t v g i p h s r m c f u a e a p
a l y d o o x p r n i t w s i g p d u u f n r

Regular Screenings No Tobacco Physical Activity Obesity Colonoscopy Pap Test
Digital Rectal Exam Low Dose CT Prostate Specific Antigen Mammogram

COMMUNITY PROFILE

25 YEARS OF SERVICE: OFFICE OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT CELEBRATES SILVER ANNIVERSARY

December begins a year-long commemoration marking the 25th anniversary of the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Since its creation in 1995, the office has dedicated itself to increasing cancer education and awareness in medically underserved populations and to addressing health disparities in the state of Alabama and beyond.

A series of activities are forthcoming to mark OCOE's silver anniversary. Each event will showcase the history of the office, its evolution and a look at how OCOE will continue to positively impact communities in the future.

"The long-standing work of this office speaks to the heart of the mission of our Cancer Center by understanding the unique needs of our community and by bringing information, groundbreaking research and access to high-quality clinical care directly to people who otherwise might not receive them," said Monica Baskin, Ph.D., associate director for community outreach and engagement at the O'Neal Cancer Center. "Countless lives have been impacted as this office delivers essential messages of cancer prevention, detection and healthy living that are informed by ongoing communication with community residents and stakeholders."

Since its creation, the office has expanded its outreach focus from breast



Claudia Hardy

and cervical cancers to include other cancers such as colorectal cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, brain tumors and multiple myeloma, which is a rare type of blood cancer.

Community health advisors (CHAs), have been key to the success of the office throughout the years. CHAs play a vital role in connecting the O'Neal Cancer Center and its researchers to communities who are most in need of cancer-related health information.

CHAs provide a trusted, culturally competent approach to leading outreach, conducting research and engaging the public. Over the past 20 years, the office has trained more than 2,000 CHAs.

"The success that our office has had in engaging



Dr. Monica Baskin

communities has been based largely on the relationship that our CHAs, CHARPs and local coordinators have helped us develop," said Claudia Hardy, program director of the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement. "I'm proud of our ability to translate research and make it relevant to people."

Glenda James, a coordinator for Sumter County, is also an office veteran. James recalls the beginnings of the office when only a small team gathered in Sumter, Marengo and Choctaw counties to promote early detection of breast and cervical cancer.

"We were constantly on the road," she said. "It took time to build relationships and solidify trust."

Due to the success of

the pilot project, OCOE in 2000 received a National Cancer Institute Special Populations Network Grant that would create the Deep South Network for Cancer Control and Prevention. It would become the flagship for outreach and community-based research programs for the office.

Improvements in public perception and acceptance of cancer awareness and education were hard-earned, James says.

"When I started out, women had so many myths and fears about preventive health. People wouldn't open the door or take the pamphlets," she said. "That's one of the greatest achievements, that people are now more aware. They now know that early detection does save lives."

CELEBRATING
YEARS
25
ANNIVERSARY



THE RESEARCH CORNER

DIAL: UAB SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR NEW TELEPHONE-BASED PROJECT TO INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The beginning of a healthier active lifestyle is just a telephone call away for hundreds of Alabama residents.

Researchers and health advocates at UAB are implementing a telephone-based program to encourage residents in Alabama's Black Belt Region to exercise more.

The initiative, entitled DIAL, will include 240 people in Sumter, Dallas, Green, Hale, Marengo and Choctaw counties. DIAL is based on a foundation of the work that the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement has developed and maintained over the years. The project uses local Office of Community Outreach & Engagement community coordinators to assist with delivering the project locally.

"This project is truly an example of neighbors helping neighbors gain access to a valuable resource," said Tara Bowman, a program manager who supervises staff for the initiative. "This technology has the ability to put people on a path to greater activity, improved health and an enhanced quality of life."

DIAL has recruited residents to participate in Dallas and Sumter counties. Participants will be compensated for their time. They will also receive a pedometer, a device that counts steps, along with continued health and physical activity support.



"Participants will receive daily automated phone calls to encourage them to increase their physical activity. The goal is to get them to exercise according to health guidelines," said Dorothy Pekmezi, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Health Behavior in the UAB School of Public Health and a scientist at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. "The lack of exercise is a problem in many communities. This low-pressure approach is designed to help people change their behavior."

Studies show a connection between cancer rates and the lack of exercise in the U.S. Half of cancer deaths and 20-40% of cancer cases in the U.S. could be prevented by adopting healthier lifestyles, in which physical activity is a major component.



OCOE staff recently spent much of the day in Sumter County to enroll participants in the DIAL program. (Photos by Marcus Glover)

Automatic telephone systems could be effective in overcoming some barriers because they don't require clinic visits or access to expensive technology.

"This is the first study, to our knowledge, to examine the effectiveness of this method to underserved populations," Pekmezi said.

Recruitment and enrollment for Greene County participants begins in late January 2021.

For more information about DIAL, please email dialstudy@uab.edu.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

How do you stick to your healthy food plan when everyone around you seems to be splurging for the holidays?

You may not be able to control what food you're served, and there will be many tempting treats. Meet the challenge by having a plan.

Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

1. Holiday-Proof Your Plan

- Eat close to usual times.

If your meal is served later than normal, eat a small snack at your usual mealtime and eat a little less when dinner is served.

- If you have a sweet treat, cut back on other carbs, such

as potatoes and bread, during the meal.

- Don't skip meals to save up for a feast. You'll be really hungry and more likely to overeat.

2. Outsmart the Feast

When you face a spread of delicious food, make healthy choices more easily:

- Have a small plate of the foods you like best.
- Start with vegetables to take the edge off your appetite.

- Eat slowly. It takes at least 20 minutes for your brain to realize you're full.

3. Fit in Favorites

No food is on the naughty list. Just slow down and enjoy a smaller serving.

4. Keep Moving

Staying active is your

Healthy Cooking for the Holidays

Join Chef Glenda Jones as she shares how to shop on a budget and eat healthy during the holidays!

When: Monday, December 7, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. CST

Register: go.uab.edu/goodcooking

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secret holiday weapon. It can help make up for eating more than usual and reduce stress during this stressful time of year.

5. Get Your Zzz's

When you are sleep deprived, you'll tend to eat

more and prefer high-fat, high-sugar food. Try to get seven to eight hours of sleep per night to guard against overeating.

Most of all, remember what the season is about: caring for yourself and others. Stay healthy.