

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

From the Director's Desk

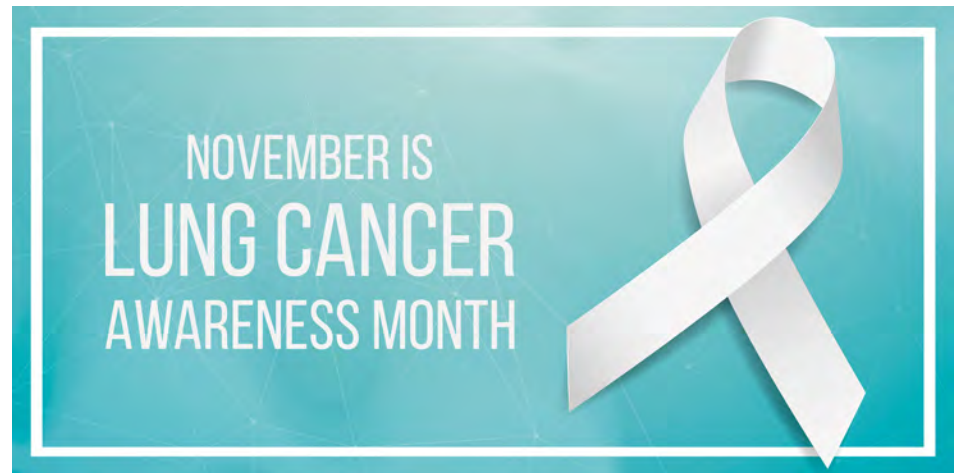
Issue 19, November 2021

## LUNG CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Lung Cancer Awareness Month provides us an annual opportunity to highlight lung cancer survivors, caregivers and families, and also focus on education, screenings and treatment.

Risk factors for lung cancer include being a current or former smoker, secondhand smoke, environmental hazards and family history. Talk to your doctor about your risks of lung cancer.

In this month of Thanksgiving, I am thankful for each of you. I admire your dedication to cancer education and



screenings, even during these challenging times.

Thanksgiving Day is also National Family History Day. Having a family health history of a disease doesn't mean that you will get it. But knowing your family health

history risk can help you know your risk and act on it. So, take some time this season to talk to your family about your shared health history.

Happy Thanksgiving!

*Claudia*

**O'NEAL** COMPREHENSIVE  
CANCER CENTER

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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### TAKE THE LUNG CANCER QUIZ:

#### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE FROM THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

1. Lung cancer only affects smokers. True or False ?
2. There is nothing people can do to lower their risk of developing lung cancer. True or False?
3. For smokers, much of the lung damage that can lead to lung cancer can be repaired if they quit smoking. True or False?
4. Replacing cigarettes with other tobacco is a safe way to decrease lung cancer risk. True or False?

**COMMUNITY PROFILE: DERRICK FLOWERS, JR.**

**REACHING THE MASSES: JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALA. COORDINATOR GETS CREATIVE, ENGAGES COMMUNITIES ABOUT LUNG CANCER**



Derrick Flowers, Jr. never misses an opportunity to share potential life-saving information about lung cancer screenings and education. Flowers, program coordinator for Jefferson County, AL at the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement, generates his own buzz around lung cancer awareness by using multiple platforms to spread the message. In particular,

Flowers has become an ambassador for the Alabama Lung Cancer Awareness Screening and Education (ALCASE) program.

ALCASE is a partnership between the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Go2 Foundation to address disparities in lung cancer in underserved communities. Community

health advisors from Jefferson, Marengo, Choctaw, Greene, Hale, Sumter and Dallas counties work to find smokers and former smokers to seek screenings for lung cancer. The teams encourage those in their communities to get screenings, which are low-dose CT scans. The process takes about 15 minutes.

“This information is so important that I want to do

everything possible to ensure that our communities receive it. We want to reach everyone,” Flowers said. “Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer death. The good news is the earlier that people learn their status, the better their chances are for successful treatment and survival.”

Men and women who are 55 and older and who are current or former smokers are urged to get a low-dose CT to screen for lung cancer. The screening age was reduced to age 50 this year.

Lung cancer screenings are covered by most insurance plans including Medicaid and Medicare if a person is considered high risk.

In addition to appearing before community groups, Flowers has created his own regular broadcasts on Facebook Live to discuss ALCASE and lung cancer awareness.

“Hello, hello. Happy Friday y’all,” Flowers said as he began a recent post, complete with his trademark smile. “Just give me a few seconds of your time. I just want to share some information about lung cancer awareness.”

His posts are just about two minutes, yet Flowers manages to pack in essential messages each time.

“I was trying to figure out new ways to reach more people even as we continue to social distance and thought about the resources that are already easily available,” Flowers said. “Facebook was chief among those options with an instant platform and a ready-made audience of friends who have been sharing the posts. I’ve already received a positive reception and hope to grow the audience as I present additional messages.”

Flowers’ creative approach is celebrated by his co-workers as a positive addition to ongoing efforts to spread the word about ALCASE and lung cancer awareness.

“Derrick is such an amazing person to work with on the ALCASE Project,” said Kathy Levy, project manager for ALCASE. “He is a professional team player and is very creative at winning people over to participate in this project. His welcoming demeanor creates an inviting, non-threatening atmosphere to discuss these issues.”

## LUNG CANCER IS THE #1 CANCER KILLER

- More people die from lung cancer than any other type of cancer.
- Screening for current and former smokers starts at age 55.
- Talk to your doctor about getting screened today.
- Remember that early detection saves lives.

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**Participants still have time to sign up  
for ALCASE through Nov. 30.**

**For more information, email  
[flowersd@uab.edu](mailto:flowersd@uab.edu).**



## VANESSA VARGAS: OFFICE OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER HONORED AMONG 'TOP 40 UNDER 40'

Vanessa Vargas, a member of the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement's Community Advisory Board, was recently honored among the Top 40 Under 40 by The Birmingham Business Journal. The list celebrates dynamic business leaders who have made significant strides before reaching their 40th birthday.

The list is a prestigious honor that includes young achievers in business, civic and social endeavors.

Vargas and her family arrived in Alabama from her native Colombia when she was five. Her family later established Latino News newspaper.

Latino News is now a multimedia company with social media posts and a daily broadcast presence.

Under her leadership, Vargas has positioned Latino News as a trusted resource to a diverse, multinational, Spanish speaking community throughout Alabama.

As a member of the Community Advisory Board for OCOE, Vargas is a strong partner in expanding outreach efforts to reach diverse populations through community collaboration and culturally-relevant, inclusive messaging.



Vanessa Vargas on awards night

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## PROGRAM AIMS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN LUNG CANCER TRIALS

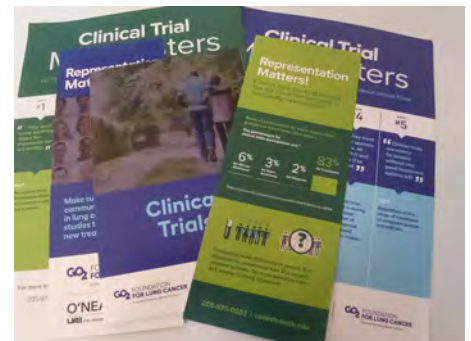
The Office of Community Outreach and Engagement and the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham are partnering with the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer in a pilot program designed to increase clinical trial participation among rural underserved populations.

The project called "Development & Implementation of Innovative Interventions to Effectively Address Clinical Trial Diversity" seeks to define clinical trial to communities, explain the need for representation from all

people within clinical trial and providing awareness and resources specifically for lung cancer clinical trials.

OCOE is providing culturally relevant educational materials to help provide a framework for clinical trial conversations among community members. Education materials are being distributed to local professional medical societies, community health workers and non-profit advocacy organizations.

"Clinical trials are sometimes misunderstood as feared last-ditch efforts, and for that reason we developed a 'myth



busters' flier, along with other simple easy to define materials about what clinical trials are," said OCOE Health Initiatives Manager Rochelle Wallace. "Other clinics also wanted to use our material, and they have been modified and expanded to include other cancer clinical trials."



## IT'S TIME TO 'SHINE A LIGHT ON LUNG CANCER'

In honor of Lung Cancer Awareness Month, the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement will join other advocates and survivors across the country for the 13th annual Shine a Light on Lung Cancer event Nov. 8. at 5:30 p.m.

This year's virtual event is designed to provide hope, inspiration and support for those impacted by lung cancer.

While screenings provide the greatest chance for finding and treating the disease early, only 4 percent of people nationally are screened each year.

Patients, family members, caregivers, students, health care advocates and professionals are especially encouraged to attend.

Shine a Light is a free, community-based event taking place at 200 healthcare facilities nationwide in partnership with GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer, one of the nation's leading patient advocacy and support non-profit organizations.

You're invited to our **Shine a Light** event.

**Understanding Lung Cancer**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**5:30 pm**

**Register at**

<https://go.uab.edu/coeshinealight2021>

### Featuring

Devika Das, MD, MSHQS



Clinical Assistant Professor  
Division of Hematology and Oncology  
University of Alabama at Birmingham

**O'NEAL** COMPREHENSIVE  
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The University of Alabama at Birmingham



Learn more at [ShineaLightonLungCancer.org](https://ShineaLightonLungCancer.org)



# SHINE A LIGHT



## SNAPSHOTS: TAKING A LOOK AT WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN OUR COMMUNITIES



OCOE staff members Rochelle Wallace and Derrick Flowers Jr. share information and laughs with fans during a recent UAB home football game.



Cistern Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Panola County, Miss. held breast cancer awareness activities in October. Trustees and deacons showed their support by wearing pink ties.



Hair salons in Barbour County, Ala. were glad to receive breast cancer information for their clients in October, including Rhehemia Glenn of the Bee Hive in Eufaula.



Dorothy McAdory, a Community Health Advisor for Jefferson County, Ala. participated in the Top 40 Under 40 event in Birmingham. She dressed in pink in observance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



Deborah Hammack, owner and director of the Jasper Beauty academy in Walker County, Ala., treated breast cancer survivors to spa services in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



More than 60 people participated in a Breast Cancer Drive-Through Parade, Oct. 5 at the Lewis Johnson's Senior Complex in Grenada, Miss. There were also nine breast cancer survivors present who received gift bags.

## LUNG CANCER QUIZ ANSWERS

### **1. Lung cancer only affects smokers. FALSE**

It's true that smoking is by far the leading risk for lung cancer. But you don't have to smoke to get lung cancer. As many as 20% of people diagnosed with lung cancer in the U.S. have never smoked. These can be caused by exposure to radon, secondhand smoke, air pollution, and exposure to certain cancer-causing agents at work. Breathing in the smoke of others called secondhand smoke increases a risk of developing lung cancer in people who don't smoke.

### **2. There is nothing people can do to lower their risk of developing lung cancer. FALSE**

People who smoke can quit, which lowers their chances of getting lung cancer. Quitting tobacco is the most most important thing anyone can do to decrease your lung cancer risk.

People who smoke should also be aware of the symptoms of lung cancer, such as chest pain, weakness, and shortness of breath, and see a doctor if they notice changes like these.

People who don't smoke can take precautions, too. Limiting exposure to secondhand smoke is easier than ever before thanks to local, state and federal laws. It is also important to find out if radon is a problem in your home. Workplace exposures to things known to be linked to lung cancer, like asbestos, radioactive ores, certain chemicals, and diesel exhaust should also be limited.

### **3. For smokers, much of the lung damage that can lead to lung cancer can be repaired if the quit smoking. TRUE**

Over time, there are many benefits to quitting smoking. Here are a few examples:

- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting your circulation improves and your lung function increases.
- 1 to 9 months after quitting coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
- 10 years after quitting the risk of dying from lung cancer is about half that of a person who is still smoking.

Quitting while you are younger will reduce your health risks more, but quitting at any age can give back years of life that would be lost by continuing to smoke.

### **4. Replacing cigarettes with other tobacco is a safe way to decrease lung cancer risk. FALSE**

All forms of tobacco are hazardous to your health. Tobacco that's put in the mouth, such as spit, oral, smokeless, chewing, and snuff tobacco is less lethal than smoking tobacco and not linked to lung cancer – but less lethal is a far cry from safe.

People who use spit and other types of smokeless tobacco greatly increase their risk of other cancers, including those of the mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach, and pancreas.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY DISSEMINATION INSTITUTE 2021 TO ALSO FEATURE PREMIERE OF ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION

We are excited about the return of our Community Outreach and Engagement Community Dissemination Institute on Nov. 14-16 at the Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa in Florence, Alabama.

The institute is an annual conference that brings together community health advisors, partners, health care providers and researchers to share information and resources.

The institute will also feature the premier of our commemorative print publication chronicling and celebrating 25 years of Outreach and Engagement.

There will be plenty of familiar faces in the pages of the publication as we take a look back at our past and salute the contributions of so many who work to eliminate cancer disparities.

