

Community Connections



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

From The Director's Desk

Issue 7, October 2020

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

October is a special time when we highlight breast cancer, a disease that has affected individuals and families in every community we serve.

In this, one of our busiest months, we remember those affected, celebrate those who have overcome, and continue to promote breast cancer awareness information that can help save lives.

In this edition of our newsletter, we highlight two of our own champions for health and breast cancer awareness.

These last several months have truly been a testament to our collective creativity and continued dedication to sharing important health messages, even during these unprecedented times. With your help, our office raised the



standard even further last month with our “Hey, Fellas” virtual conversation series on prostate cancer awareness and men’s health. This marked a significant turning point as our first virtual educational sessions that were open to the general public.

During this month, remember to participate in both our “Sister Talk,” and a lunch and learn on breast cancer. Please continue to contribute your ideas and suggestions as we continue

outreach and research activities while enhancing our virtual efforts. Also, contact our office if you need educational materials.

P.S. Don’t forget to ask every woman you know if she has had her mammogram. In fact, are you current with your breast cancer screening? Self-care is very important.

Thanks,
– Claudia

O’NEAL COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER
UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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Breast Cancer Awareness Month

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C	L	I	N	I	C	A	L	E	X	A	M	M	P
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SURVIVOR
SUPPORT GROUPS
MAMMOGRAM
EARLY DETECTION
RISK FACTORS
CLINICAL EXAM
SCREENING
STOP SMOKING
FAMILY HISTORY

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/1285733/>



THE RESEARCH CORNER

O'Neal Cancer Center joins national effort to address impact of COVID-19 pandemic on cancer prevention, treatment

A group of 17 cancer centers in the United States, including the O'Neal Cancer Center, have come together to better understand the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in delaying cancer detection, care and prevention. Cancer centers are working together with the National Cancer Institute on the impact of the pandemic on cancer care, prevention and survivorship. UAB is the coordinating site for the effort. Officials have warned that the pandemic might prevent some patients from undergoing needed screenings and delay access to procedures that could result in late-stage diagnosis and cancer death.

The cancer center, through the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement will conduct surveys among healthy volunteers and cancer survivors about their health and well-being during the pandemic. The survey will focus on work and employment, housing/home life, social activities, emotional well-being, physical health, and behavior related to COVID-19 prevention, as well as behaviors such as physical activity and tobacco use that have links to cancer. By complying with current pandemic restrictions, individuals will be contacted by phone, text and social media. Monica Baskin, Ph.D., Associate Director for Community Outreach and

Engagement at the cancer center, urges patients to continue to undergo age-appropriate cancer screenings and reach out to their health care providers regarding options.

"These are discussions that patients should have directly with their health care provider to receive individual guidance," Baskin said. "And on the flip side, the COVID-19 reality demands that health care providers and outreach teams learn ways to adapt strategies across the cancer care continuum to combat the deadly secondary effects of the pandemic."

SAVE THE DATES:

SISTER TALK 2020

**5:30PM | TUESDAY
OCT. 13, 2020**

REGISTER: [GO.UAB.EDU/SISTERTALK2020](https://go.uab.edu/sistertalk2020)

A CANDID TALK AMONG WOMEN ABOUT BREAST CANCER AND THE MYTHS AND FEARS THAT SURROUND IT.

ALSO, JOIN US FOR THE NEXT WEEK'S BREAST CANCER LUNCH-AND-LEARN SESSION:

BREAST CANCER 101

**NOON | MONDAY
OCT. 19, 2020**

REGISTER: [GO.UAB.EDU/PINK101](https://go.uab.edu/pink101)

Stay up to date

with all the activities and news at the O'Neal Cancer Center and the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement. Follow us:

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O'NEAL COMPREHENSIVE
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Nan Brown-Curtis



Nan Brown-Curtis and her husband Richard share a moment during her 70th birthday celebration in 2018.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

SHARING, SURVIVING AND THRIVING: COMMUNITY HEALTH LEADERS PROVIDE EDUCATION, EXAMPLES OF HOPE IN THE FACE OF BREAST CANCER**NAN BROWN-CURTIS: MINISTER OF AWARENESS AND HOPE**

Cancer, including breast cancer, has been a constant presence in the life of Nan Brown-Curtis.

A sister and a niece both succumbed to breast cancer. Her mother and two aunts had breast cancer also. Her first husband died of lymphoma. Her current husband is a kidney cancer survivor and is currently fighting myeloma. Brown-Curtis herself is a survivor of colorectal cancer. Brown-Curtis has built and crossed many bridges on her cancer journey. She is now using her experiences to help others make their own successful passage.

"It's important for people to see others who have had a cancer diagnosis and are still alive," Brown-Curtis said.

A resident of Selma, Brown-Curtis is a longtime affiliate of the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement and a member of the O'Neal Cancer Center's Community Advisory Board. She uses her personal history

to serve as a living example of survival and perseverance.

Community service is also a family affair for Brown-Curtis as she, along with several of her sisters, share their family's history of cancer. The women advocate in their Dallas County community, for early testing and awareness of family medical histories.

"We didn't keep what we knew inside of us. We shared it," Brown-Curtis said. "We figured that it was our mission. We wanted people to know that cancer doesn't care who you are, how old you are or how young you are."

She and her sisters do their advocacy work under the name of "Johnnie's Girls," in honor of their mother, Johnnie Mae Summers. Summers was a breast cancer survivor, who later died of ovarian cancer. Brown-Curtis is a strong advocate for families learning and discussing their shared medical histories. Her family shares the BRCA gene. Mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes increase the risk of several cancers including

breast and ovarian cancer.

"Families must find out their family history so they can start testing early," Brown-Curtis said.

In January, Brown-Curtis, already a survivor of colorectal cancer, was presented with yet another challenge when she was diagnosed with lung cancer. She confides that even she was nervous about beginning her latest round of targeted chemotherapy treatment.

"First of all we have to get rid of fear and doubt because they are the enemy," she explained. "I said, 'God, I don't know what's in this medicine. I do not have a clue. But you do.' I walk in wellness and I don't care what it is or how bad it is." She was a nurse for 26 years before transitioning into a 20-year career in healthcare professions education at the high school and college levels.

Brown-Curtis remains an advisor to many in her community. The COVID-19 pandemic has kept her physically away, but her phone

continues to ring. And she'll always answer.

"As long as the Lord allows me to help someone, I'm going to help," she said.

Family, faith and obedience to medical advice are essential, she said. As she encourages others, Brown-Curtis continues to find her own inspiration. "The positive has been the example that other people see coming from us," Brown-Curtis said. "A lot of people know we have had adversity. They've seen endurance. They've seen that you can make it. They've seen how important family is."

Brown-Curtis is also an ordained minister.

"You have to be connected to someone greater than you and greater than anything that can happen in the Earth realm and around you," she said. "That strong faith is important for the journey."



Darlene Robinson

FELLOWSHIP, FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT IN GREENE COUNTY

A visitor listening to Darlene Robinson's community support group in Greene County might be hard pressed to ever hear the word cancer brought up in conversation. While most of the regular members are breast cancer

survivors, talk about their shared disease is rare. There are too many other subjects and activities to keep everyone busy.

"If you were to come one of our meetings you would not know that it was a cancer survivors meeting," said Robinson, a coordinator for

Greene and Hale Counties. "We don't drown them with breast cancer information. We talk about it, but that's not the focus."

Instead, the group supports each other by offering a short break from life's pressures and a forum when members need an outlet. "They're the experts on cancer. I don't need to tell them anything," Robinson said. "This is a way for them to release tension and do something different. It's relieving a lot of mental stress."

There's just one rule. "Bring in something inspirational. It sets the tone for our meeting," Robinson said of the group of about 15 members.

Friends, relatives and caretakers who have been affected by cancer also

participate. Robinson said one woman's presence after surviving both colon cancer and breast cancer serves as a living symbol of hope.

"And she's still with us," Robinson said. "We just have an array of people."

While the pandemic has postponed physical, in-person activities, Robinson is anxious for the day when she can once again convene her support group. In the meantime, she remains connected to members with regular phone calls.

"I just want to make a difference in my community. I want a place where all of us fit in," Robinson said. "Just because you're a cancer survivor or just because you might not have what everybody else has, I want you to fit in."