

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

ISSUE 43, JULY 2025

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

July invites us to reflect on family, wellness, and the steps we can take—individually and together—to build healthier futures. Family means even more to me with the recent expansion of my own little family. At the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, we recognize the power of **family health history** in cancer prevention and early detection. Knowing your family's medical history and sharing it with your care team can guide screening decisions and lead to life-saving conversations. This month, we encourage you to explore your own history, talk with loved ones, and take active steps toward wellness.

We also take a moment to celebrate the momentum of community-driven progress. In June, we hosted the *Breaking the Boundaries* symposium, bringing together 89 attendees from across Alabama and the Southeast. The event sparked dynamic conversations around health innovation, research collaboration, and equity in care. These exchanges remind us that community wisdom and institutional science must walk hand in hand.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue these

multi-directional conversations at the 2025 *Community Dissemination Institute*, taking place August 24–26 in Mobile, Alabama. This event will offer a space to translate research into action and elevate catchment-relevant priorities in cancer prevention and control.

As always, thank you for walking with us in purpose, partnership, and progress. We remain committed to honoring community knowledge and working toward a future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

In partnership,

- Dr. Nolan

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Research Corner

Training Community Health Workers to Boost Clinical Trial Awareness

Clinical trials are important for finding better cancer treatments, but not everyone has the same chance to join them. Black Americans, for example, make up only 5% of adult cancer trial participants, even though they represent about 14% of the U.S. population. This lack of diversity can lead to unfair cancer outcomes and less useful research results.

To help change this, the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) created a new program called **CRAFT** (Community Research Academy to Foster RepresentaTion). CRAFT trains community health workers (CHWs) to talk with others in their communities about clinical trials and why they matter.

CRAFT is a three-hour session that includes

an introduction to clinical trials, myth-busting facts, a panel with real participants, and a hands-on activity using

websites to find trials. CHWs can then teach others what they learned.

In December 2023, 21 CHWs completed the first CRAFT training. In July 2024, 19 CHWs attended a refresher. After both sessions, nearly all participants said the program was "excellent" or "good." Knowledge and understanding of clinical trials improved for many. CHWs also asked for more stories and tips for sharing this information with the public.

CRAFT shows that with the right tools and support, trusted community members can help spread important health information. UAB plans to continue improving CRAFT and share it with other health centers across the country. Together, they hope to make clinical research more fair and inclusive for everyone.



Regional Wellness Day Recap

Dallas County Hosts Successful 2nd Annual Regional Wellness Day

The 2nd Annual Regional Wellness Day in Dallas County, AL, was a resounding success, showcasing the power of community partnerships and grassroots outreach. The Regional Wellness Day concept has clearly taken root, growing stronger each year. By strategically aligning with existing opportunities, partners and resources, this year's event saw increased participation and deeper engagement across the board.

While final numbers are still being tallied, early estimates suggest that approximately 150 community members attended. Roughly 50

biometric screenings and 10 PSA tests were completed, providing valuable preventive health services. Additionally, a handful of research participants stopped by, and many more community members visited Rural Health's mobile unit, which was a key feature of the day.

A HUGE round of applause is owed to Dallas County, Alabama's coordinator, Dale Bell and the Dallas County CHAs for their tireless dedication and leadership in making this event a success! Their work in organizing and promoting the Wellness Day made a clear impact on turnout and engagement.

Regional Wellness Day continues to prove that when we work together—across roles, counties, and programs—we can build healthier, more connected communities.





Support Our Patient Assistance Fund:
Your Donation Makes a Difference

We invite you to join us in supporting the Patient Assistance Fund through the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement at the UAB O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. Your generous donation will provide critical resources to patients facing financial hardships, helping them access essential cancer care, medications, and transportation services.

Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a tangible impact on the lives of those in need. Together, we can ease the burden for patients and their families during their cancer journey.

To donate or learn more, please scan the code below or contact our office directly.

Thank you for your support!

