

WEST VIRGINIA BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAM (WVBCCSP)

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Volunteer Newsletter

Volunteer Highlight: Mary Myers



Mary and her husband Randy

In 1986, Mary Myers' mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and sadly, in 1987, she died of the disease. Mary said, "The disease took her from me and my sisters." In November 2015, Mary attended the WVBCCSP Volunteer Luncheon in Flatwoods for the first time. She went as a guest of her sister, Elizabeth Austin, who works with the WVBCCSP. While at the Luncheon, Mary saw the enthusiasm and excitement shown by the many volunteers attending the event. She realized that volunteering for WVBCCSP was an opportunity to help educate women in her own community about the importance of breast cancer screening and inform them that the WVBCCSP may be able to help pay for mammograms. Later that day she told Ruthie Watts, WVBCCSP Health Information Specialist, that she wanted to become a volunteer for the Walk for Women in Grafton, her hometown.

In March 2016, Mary was due for a mammogram. She got an order from her doctor, but did not make the appointment for her mammogram. She felt like it didn't fit it into her busy life's schedule. (Women: does that sound familiar?) When she heard that Bonnie's Bus was coming to the Reedsville Fire Department she made an appointment. It started to snow the day she was to have her mammogram on the Bus, but she was determined to get it and drove to Reedsville.

Mary thought the Bus staff was friendly and she felt very comfortable during her visit. The technician was patient and took the time to get a thorough history from her. Later she was surprised to be called back for a second mammogram, as something looked suspicious. She thought it was probably scar tissue from a previous breast surgery. Next she had to have an ultrasound which worried her a little bit. When she had to go back and get a sentinel lymph node biopsy, her worry level went up. Then she received the news that no woman wants to hear, she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I can tell you it rocked my world!" exclaimed Mary. "But my outcome was different than my mother's. I had regular screenings and my cancer was found early! I had to have surgery and radiation, but I'm still here doing the things I love and spending time with my family. I want to see my grandchildren grow up!"

Mary believes she is a cheerleader for Breast Cancer Awareness Month and is very involved in the Grafton Walk for Women and other fundraisers in Grafton. She also feels it is important to advocate that women take care of themselves and get an annual mammogram.

Ruthie Watts is so grateful that Mary stepped up that day in November. She noted that Mary's sisters help with the different fundraisers in Grafton and continue to support Mary. "Mary has been very busy since taking on the Walk for Women. She and the committee added other fundraisers throughout the year: purse bingo, a purse auction, and a 5K walk/run. All proceeds from the fundraisers benefit the WV Breast and Cervical Cancer Diagnostic and Treatment Fund. During Mary's first year as the Walk Chairperson, attendance as well as donations have increased significantly."

Watching her mother go through a breast cancer diagnosis, treatment, and losing her was the biggest reason Mary started volunteering. She knows that her mother's spirit is what keeps her going and drives her to let friends and the community know how important it is to get regular screenings.

August is National Immunization Month

National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) reminds us how important vaccinations are for people of all ages! Each week, NIAM focuses on a different groups of people:

- Adults
- Pregnant women
- Babies and young children
- Preteens and teens

Communities use August to raise awareness about the important role vaccines play in preventing serious, sometimes deadly, diseases. For example, the human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus that can lead to cervical cancer and other cancers. Every year in the U.S., HPV causes 30,700 cancers in men and women. The HPV vaccination can prevent most of those cancers (approximately 28,000) from occurring. Talk with your child's or grandchild's doctor about getting the HPV vaccine. It saves lives.

For more information about vaccinations check with your state or local health department or visit www.cdc.gov.

The New Bus

Bonnie's Bus is a mobile mammography unit that travels across West Virginia (WV). The Bus offers WV women mammograms in a comfortable setting close to home. The Bus serves women who have private insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare, as well as women who qualify for the WVBCCSP. Grant funds and donations are available to cover the cost of a mammogram for women aged 40 and older who lack insurance coverage.

In 2016, 2,370 screening mammograms were completed and 15 cases of breast cancer were detected on the Bus. One patient that received a mammogram on the Bus said, "I know many women in our area who would never have had a mammogram at all if Bonnie's Bus did not come to them." Bonnie's Bus works closely with WVBCCSP providers and Health Information Specialists to schedule visits throughout the state.

This year the program is receiving a new bus, pictured below, which has a new 3-D mammography machine. The staff looks forward to fulfilling the goal of Bonnie's Bus - to assure that all WV women have access to life-saving screening mammograms for early detection of breast cancer.

