

News

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Vidant Bertie celebrates heart health

LESLIE BEACHBOARD
Bertie Ledger-Advance

WINDSOR - Young at heart.

That was the theme the 2018 Vidant Bertie Hospital's Heart Truth Dinner.

The event was held Thursday, Feb. 15 at the Cashie-Heritage Convention Center.

The event was a packed house, booking up weeks in advance.

Vidant Bertie Hospital Vice President of Patient Care Services Silva Rose welcomed guests.

Each guest was given a gift bag.

Rose explained the reusable tote bags were filled with information, a water bottle and other resources.

Vidant Bertie Hospital Lead Chaplain, the Rev. Jeffery Russell, led the invocation for the evening's dinner.

Heritage House Restaurant provided a meal of grilled chicken with peach chutney, grilled asparagus, baked sweet potatoes and red velvet cake.

Guests enjoyed their meal while talking and getting to know the other guests at their table.

The first speaker of the evening was Dr. Tracy Sambo, general surgeon at Vidant General Surgery-Edenton and Windsor.

Sambo opened by telling a funny story about her mother.

"My first job was at McDonald's and I had to go in at 4 a.m. when I opened on the weekends. My mother always wanted me to call her when I go there. So on this particular morning, I got to work and parked in the parking lot behind the store and went in and started to work," she said.

"I forgot to call my mother and she could not get through to me on the phone because one of the employees was on the phone. She gets up in her pajamas and drives around the McDonald's looking for me," Sambo added.

According to Sambo, her mother got out and began beating on the drive-through window.

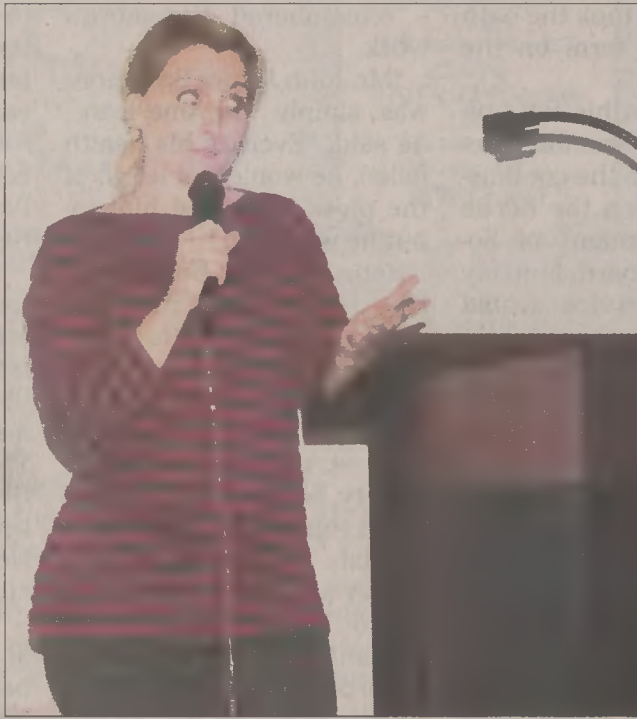
"Other employees began yelling for me to call the police because a homeless person is trying to break in. I called the police and my mother was pulled a few miles away, fitting the description of the person I had described. My mother would always tell the story of how I tried to get her arrested," she said.

Sambo discussed the best practices for keeping a healthy heart and tips to improve heart health.

"Get regular check-ups with your doctor. Have labs drawn to check for cholesterol levels, have your blood pressure checked. Know your current levels and make goals to help bring them back to normal," she added.

Sambo challenged everyone to get active.

"Get active. Try to get in 150 minutes a week in exercise. A good way is to get your friend together and get moving.



Dr. Tracy Sambo of Vidant General Surgery discusses information on how to keep a healthy heart and prevent heart problems.



Jessica Malore tells her story of having a massive heart attack at the age of 16, a heart transplant and three battles with cancer.

Go on walks together," she said.

According to Sambo, one of the biggest ways to help heart health is diet.

She recommended not using the 80/20 method. This is when individuals practice healthy eating habits Monday through Friday and do not eat as healthy on the weekends.

"Weight loss is achieved by diet," said Sambo.

Sambo also explained the symptoms of a heart attack include: breathlessness, flu-like symptoms, fatigue, dizziness and pain in the upper back and shoulder.

"A major cardiac event happens over a short time and does not happen over the course of days," closed Sambo.

Next, Rose introduced the evening's keynote speaker, Jessica Malore.

Malore told her story about having a heart attack at 16, having a heart transplant and battling cancer three times.

"I was a 16-year-old teenager eating dinner in a restaurant with my family when I began not to feel well. I began having pain down my arms and in my chest. I thought I was having an allergic reaction. The last thing I remember is hearing someone yell, 'call 9-1-1,'" said Malore.

According to Malore, she was transported to a local hospital, and as a doctor performed an echocardiogram on her heart, the doctor explained the she was having a massive cardiac event.

She had a blood clot that needed to be removed. Malore was moved to a new hospital.

After the move, Ma-

lore's health began to increasingly decline and last rites were performed for her.

Malore was eventually transferred to a third hospital, where she learned she would need a heart transplant to live a full life.

Being it can take so long to receive a heart transplant, Malore was placed on a left ventricular assist device heart pump.

The battery-operated device acts as the left side of the heart and has to have the battery changed every two to four hours.

Due to a complication from a balloon placed in her leg, Malore had to have her leg amputated from above the knee just days after the heart pump had been implanted.

"I had to decide between my life or my leg, and I decided to keep my life. I woke up that Sunday feeling better. I know I couldn't change I had lost my leg. I received a prosthetic leg and learned to walk with it," said Malore.

She moved onto the floor of the hospital known as the Heart Failure Hotel.

This was the floor where individuals were moved who is waiting for heart transplants.

"I still wanted to go home and live a normal life. All of my family members and friends had to learn how to change my batteries and learn how to manually pump my heart if I have a malfunction with the pump," she added.

After six weeks, Malore was able to leave the Heart Failure Hotel and return home to her semi-normal life.

"I still had dreams, and I wanted to go to college. I decided to apply to Princeton University," she said.

Two days before prom, Malore was ad-

mitted to the hospital due to her red blood cell count being low. She had to receive three blood transfusions.

"I was in the hospital and upset because I had a nail appointment. The doctor called downstairs and a nurse came up and gave me a French manicure. The next day I was released in time to get my hair done and make it to prom. I was named prom queen," added Malore.

Several days before her high school graduation, Malore got the phone call she had been waiting for. There was a heart available.

"I remember waking up and feeling relief and joy feeling my heart beating on my hand," she said.

After attending her

freshman year at Princeton University, Malore found a swollen lymph node.

After the lymph node began to grow, she had some testing done and was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

Malore fought the lymphoma and went into remission.

She graduated from Princeton University in 2003.

Malore became a motivational speaker and moved to New York but six-and-a-half years later she was diagnosed with a stronger form of lymphoma.

"The new lymphoma required stronger treatment that requires three weeks a month of inpatient chemotherapy. I performed my job and conference calls,

and continued to work for a hospital room. I squeezed every moment I could into my week off. After eight months of treatment, I was in remission," said Malore.

She explained she became an advocate for National Donor Day, which also falls on Valentine's Day.

Malore had the opportunity to meet the mother of her heart donor and ride in the Rose Bowl Parade in honor of her.

"A few years ago, I began to have unusual symptoms and was diagnosed with endometrial cancer at 33 years old. In the past I have never documented the journey just the outcome, so this time I documented the journey," she added.

Malore cut her hair and donated it. She underwent a hysterectomy and completed chemotherapy. Then she did a powerful photo shoot with no hair.

"I have been given second, third and fourth chances at life. I want to educate people about issues. Everyone should take time, listen to their body and see a doctor," Malore closed.

Rose concluded the event by thanking each of the guests and drawing a name for a door prize donated by the Bertie County Cooperative Extension.

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