

## BRIEFS

### Myrick introduces breast cancer act

Recognizing the increasing risk of breast cancer, U.S. Rep. Sue Myrick (NC-9) introduced the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act that will provide funds to study the link between breast cancer and the environment.

"We focus a lot of attention on breast cancer treatment and research for a cure, but we also need to look at prevention. The more we study what causes breast cancer and what choices we can make to prevent it, the more lives we'll save," Myrick said.

"Forty years ago, only one out of 14 women in the U.S. were diagnosed with breast cancer. Today, one out of eight women is at risk. It's important that we study what's going on in our environment, diet, and lifestyle that's contributing to the development of breast cancer."

"What has changed that has caused the occurrence of breast cancer to dramatically increase in our country? We owe it to the over three million Americans currently living with breast cancer to try and get an answer to this question."

The bill would allow the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to make grants for the development and operation of research centers designed to study the extent environmental facts play in causing breast cancer. The NIEHS is based in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park and is a branch of the National Institute of Health.

Myrick is a Co-Chair of the House Cancer Caucus and is a breast cancer survivor.

### Cancer survivors asked to walk in Relay

The Kings Mountain Relay for Life committee is preparing for the Joseph R. Smith Relay for Life June 8 at the Kings Mountain Walking Track on Cleveland Avenue.

Cancer survivors are needed to participate in the Survivors Lap walk which officially gets the fund-raising event under way at 6 p.m.

For more information, call Maxine Bennett at 739-6889 or Dot Dixon at 739-4238.

### Firefighters to fill boots for MDA

Kings Mountain, Bethlehem and Oak Grove firefighters will be filling their boots with donations to benefit the local Muscular Dystrophy Association Saturday, May 19 at various locations throughout Kings Mountain.

Funds raised by the firefighters enable MDA to continue providing direct services to local children and adults with neuromuscular disorders. Free medical services are available at the MDA Clinic located at Carolinas Medical Center for individuals diagnosed with any of the 40 diseases covered by MDA. Research grants, also funded at CMC, offer promising avenues toward discovery of cures and treatments for neuromuscular diseases. In addition, MDA provides assistance with the purchase of wheelchairs and leg braces, and offers a summer camp program geared to the needs of children and adults with muscular dystrophy.

Firefighters nationwide are celebrating their 47th anniversary as a sponsor of MDA. For more information call the MDA office at 704-567-2912 or Lenny Wright at Kings Mountain Fire Department.

### Legion Auxiliary plans poppy sale

The American Legion Auxiliary will be selling Poppies in front of Harris Teeter from 3 p.m.-8:30 p.m. on Thursday May 24, and from 9 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. on Friday, May, 25.

### Firefighter service set at Shelby station

The annual fallen firefighter service will be held Friday, May 25 at 12 noon at the Firefighter Memorial located at the Charles Road Fire Station, intersection of Highway 74 Bypass West and Charles Road, Shelby.

May 25 is the date of the tragic 1979 fire which killed four firefighters and a city gas worker in uptown Shelby.

There will be a short program followed by the ringing of the last bell and taps. The public is invited.

## CANCER

From 1A

Monday, May 23, 1988, Mary Jo and I returned to the local hospital at 6:30 a.m. "I just want to tell you, I told my doctor, that I know we agreed that the operation would be so that I could have reconstruction but the important thing is to get the cancer out, regardless of how you do it."

He patted me on the head and said, "I know and I plan to do that."

The surgery went well. I required no radiation, no chemotherapy, no exercise.

"You are one of the lucky ones," my doctor told me. You have a 95 to 100 percent chance cancer will never reoccur. I can't tell too many of my cancer patients that."

Nearly four weeks after my surgery I was back at my desk at The Herald.

If detected early enough breast cancer is survivable.

It is this message of optimism that I have taken to 50 states and eight foreign countries as National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, 1999-2000. I felt if I reached the helm of the Auxiliary, with its membership of nearly one million women, that this was an issue to advocate. Being the leader of the world's largest women's patriotic service organization gave me the platform to spread this message of hope. Everywhere I have spoken to men and women I have said that "I stand before you by the grace of God and because of early detection of breast cancer by a mammogram." All ages of women in virtually every state I visited pledged to have yearly mammograms.

For its first objective in our Community Service Program we pushed increasing awareness through the promotion of early detection and education on the disease itself. We also reminded our audiences that while women predominately are diagnosed with breast cancer, it can happen to men as well. One to three percent of breast cancer patients are men.

We told our audiences that part of the reason women do not get a mammogram lies in fear. However, if something is abnormal, finding it early is one's best defense. A mammogram can detect a lump years before a woman could discover it on her own. Moreover, it is comforting to know that even if

something questionable is detected, more than 80 percent of lumps or suspicious areas are not cancerous.

A biopsy, a minor operation where a thin needle removes a small amount of tissue to determine if the lump is malignant, is the only definite way to know if cancer is present. Breast cancer treatment can include a lumpectomy, limited surgery which removes the cancer but not the entire breast, radiation, mastectomy, chemotherapy and/or hormone therapy.

While there are a number of measures which can be taken to lower one's risk of getting breast cancer, it cannot be prevented. Both its cause and its cure remain undiscovered, but today there is an estimated two million breast cancer survivors in the United States. The role that diet, weight, and environmental factors play in the development of breast cancer is being continuously studied.

Generally, a regimen of regular exercise, a low fat diet, alcohol moderation, and a smoke free lifestyle is recommended to lower risks of breast cancer as well as other cancer. Also, there is no correlation between breast size and cancer risk.

Along with awareness our emphasis last year enhanced resources available. One resource is the Tell A Friend program where each participant encourages others to tell a friend. Twenty-five percent of those who get a mammogram do so because a friend encouraged it.

A project which started in North Carolina but is now going national due to its overwhelming response is the Breast Cancer Button Chair. I invited a representative of Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, to take the chair with its more than 1,000 buttons to a national meeting last March in Washington, DC. The idea to decorate chairs with buttons representing survivors caught on as my national President's project for breast cancer. Since my return home to Kings Mountain, the mailman has been busy delivering chairs of all sizes and decorated with buttons. It is the stories behind the buttons that give the chairs the powerful impact. Each button represents a life and a victory.

Proceeds from my National President's Project, breast cancer awareness, were divided between the button chair project and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the nation's leading catalyst in the fight against breast cancer and sponsor of the Komen Race for the Cure. The money will be used not only for research but to help women who can't afford treatments.

Why did I share personal experiences? Because I have learned that attitude, a God-given gift, is the key to survival of most any challenges of life, especially cancer.

When I returned to normal routines I noticed little things that I never noticed before, I appreciated even more the small kindnesses of family and friends and I noticed the beauty of nature and its wonders more intensely. Sunny days, laughing kids and small things that most people miss. After cancer, I found I treasured life's friendships more and probably have gained more out of life this past 13 years than ever before. That in itself is an enriching experience.

Yes, cancer is scary. Five members of my immediate family have had bouts with cancer, two survive. The heart of our family, our mother, died March 22 of heart disease. Five survivors from our church, in addition to a team of 16, hope to participate in the Relay for Life. Many friends in the Kings Mountain area have had bouts with cancer.

Yes, people die of cancer every day but people are also run over by drunk drivers and defective wiring causes a family to perish in a house fire. We hear or read about tragedies and call

these people victims of fate. Yet, fate will have no part in the deaths of many women from breast cancer this year. Early detection saves lives but because we are human we are afraid of what we may find out when we go for a checkup or a mammogram and so we put it off until tomorrow. Many times lumps are not malignant.

I hope this article will say to people who face any form of cancer that you cannot only survive but you can triumph and flourish and have active, meaningful and productive lives.

## FACTS ABOUT BREAST CANCER

### Age 40 and over

- +have a mammogram every year
- +have a clinical breast exam by a health care professional every year.
- +do a breast self-examination each month.
- +do a breast self-examination each month.
- +have a clinical breast exam by a health care professional every three years.

Remember, most lumps are not cancerous, more than 80 percent are not, but to be sure, see your doctor even if you've had a mammogram recently when you experience any of the following:

- .any lumps, thickening or swelling
- .dimpling
- .skin irritation
- .distortion
- .retraction of the nipple
- .scaliness
- .abnormal, painful or bloody discharge with no known origin

### Risk Factors

#### Age

The risk increases as a woman gets older. About 85 percent of breast cancer occurs in women 50 and older. The risk is especially high for women older than 60. A woman of 70 is almost twice as likely to develop breast cancer in the next year as a woman 50.

### Family History

The risk increases for a woman whose mother, sister, daughter, grandmother or two or more close relatives, such as cousins, have had the disease. More than 80 percent of breast cancers are diagnosed in women who have no history of it in their family.

### Personal History

Women who have had breast cancer may develop it again. Women with a history of breast disease and women having so much dense breast tissue on a previous mammogram that a clear reading is difficult are also at increased risk.

Laboratory evidence that a woman carrying a specific genetic mutation or change will also increase her susceptibility to breast cancer.

Women who had their first child at age 30 or never have children and women who began menstruating before age 12 or completed menopause after age 55 are also at a higher risk.

A number of published reports have shown increased risk for women who used oral contraceptives for a number of years.

### Mammography - what to expect

The mammogram should be scheduled one week after the menstrual period begins, when the breasts will be the least tender, avoid using deodorant and lotions on the day of the mammogram. Wear two piece clothing to make the undressing more convenient.

The mammogram will be performed by a specially trained radiological technologist. The woman will be asked to undress, waist up only, and stand next to the x-ray machine.

Two flat surfaces will then compress each breast for a few seconds. Compression is necessary to produce the best pictures using the lowest amount of radiation possible.

It may feel slightly uncomfortable but the examination should not be painful.

The entire mammogram exam takes about 15 minutes.

If you do not hear from your physician within 10 days do not assume that your mammogram was normal. Confirm this by calling the physician or the facility.

Mammogram costs vary from area to area, from \$ 35 and up.

Insurance coverage is becoming more widespread. Ask your health care insurer.

(For more information contact the American Cancer Society 1-800-ACS-2345; The National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations- 1-800-719-9154; National Breast Cancer Awareness Month www.nbcam.org).

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Caring  
for the elderly  
or disabled  
at home?

If you are caring for an elderly or disabled person at home, then you'll want to mark your calendar for free educational and instructional classes held this month at Kings Mountain Hospital.

■ **Caring For The Mentally Confused**  
Tuesday, May 15  
6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

■ **Caring For People With Limited Mobility Or Who Are Bedridden**  
Saturday, May 19  
10 a.m. - Noon  
(This class repeats from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.)

■ **Planning Ahead For End-Of-Life Decisions**  
Tuesday, May 29  
1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Space in these classes is limited. To reserve your space call 704-730-5400. This instructional series is sponsored by Kings Mountain Hospital, The Life Enrichment Center, the N.C. Cooperative Extension and the Community Ethics Education Task Force.



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