LRGHealthcare Urges Breast Cancer Awareness

By Ginny Witkin, RN, LRGHealthcare Breast Health Coordinator

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2009, there will be more than 192,000 new cases of breast cancer identified in the United States; and more than 40,000 deaths from this disease.

In fact, the chance of a woman having invasive breast cancer sometime during her life is about one in eight. The chance of her dying from breast cancer is about one in 35.

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in the United States, and it is second only to lung cancer in the number of lives it takes each year. But breast cancer death rates are dropping – most likely the result of early detection and better treatment.

Right now, there are about 2.5 million breast cancer survivors living in the United States. That's 2.5 million women who are beating this disease.

The keys to beating breast cancer are education and early detection. The American Cancer Society recommends that all women over the age of 20 should have a clinical breast examination by a doctor or nurse every three years. Women should also become familiar with their bodies. Monthly self-examinations are an option, and every woman should report any changes in her breasts to her doctor immediately.

Once a woman reaches the age of 40, clinical exams should increase in frequency to once each year, and annual mammograms should begin.

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast that can show lumps or abnormalities too small for you or your physician to feel during an exam. Since chances of getting breast cancer increase as you get older, it's important to be checked on an annual basis – one exam is not enough.

LRGHealthcare is now pleased to offer digital mammography, the gold standard in mammography, at all four of our locations. It's a quick, simple, easy procedure, and it could save your life.

If you are over the age of 40 and have not had a mammogram this year, October is a great time to take this important step.

It's one call, and it's a call that could save your life. Please help us make sure that every woman who faces breast cancer has her very best chance to be a survivor – especially if that woman is you.

Please call today for an appointment: Franklin Regional Hospital, 934-2060 ext. 350; Women's Imaging Center at Lakes Region General Hospital, 527-2992; Laconia Clinic, 524-5151; or Lakes Region OB/GYN, 524-9197.

Dollars and Sense

Cost should not be a barrier to any woman in our community getting a mammogram. Medicare, Medicaid, and most other insurance plans cover mammograms. There are also a number of programs in our community to help women access regular mammograms.

The Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (BCCP) provides free breast and cervical cancer screenings and diagnostic services to low income, uninsured, and underinsured New Hampshire women. 527-7000

LRGHealthcare's Mammography Bridge Program helps bridge the gap for women who don't qualify for BCCP, but still have financial barriers to receiving a regular screening mammogram. 527-2940

Reduced-rate Screening Mammograms – During the month of October, LRGHealthcare offers reduced-rate screening mammograms for women who meet financial guidelines. Please call any of our locations for more information.

Tanger Outlet, LRGHealthcare Host 5K Family Event

Tanger Outlet Center and LRGHealthcare are pleased to host the First Annual 5K Fit for Families Run/Walk event on Saturday, October 3, from 8 AM to noon at the Tanger Outlet Center on Route 3 in Tilton.

This special event is intended to raise awareness about breast cancer and breast health. Explore educational displays focused on women's health, talk to health professionals, and *shop!* There will be free services such as chair massage, blood pressure screenings, nutritional consultation, and more.

If you are one of the first 350 registered to walk or run in the race, you'll take home a complimentary bag full of treats and coupons for the outlets. Race event registration is $25.

Pink Cards will also be available for purchase at the Tanger Outlet Center until October 20. Purchase a Pink Card for $1 and you'll save 25% on a single item at any of 30 participating Tanger Outlet Center stores. Proceeds from the card sales will be donated to LRGHealthcare's Digital Mammography Campaign.

For more information about this exciting event, please visit LRGH.org or call LRGHealthcare Community Education at 934-2060 ext. 8369.

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ful, took a deep breath and asked the survivors in the room to stand up. She thanked them and told them she needed to see them and feel their strength.

Bethany shared her journey with the audience. She had been around cancer enough that she figured she could barge right through, scheduling her lumpectomy as if it were a lunch date, getting out the next day, and being ready for the holidays.

What she didn't realize was how inconvenient cancer can be: all the doctor appointments, all the testing, and all the waiting.

Bethany had her lumpectomy only to find the cancer was larger than expected and was in one of the lymph nodes. She had to rearrange her schedule again for a double mastectomy, four months of chemotherapy, and radiation for six and a half weeks. She chose to treat it very aggressively, with the goal being as much peace and serenity as possible for her life after the treatment.

"Everyone does this differently," Bethany reassured the audience. "Everyone has their own reasons for making their decisions. Everyone's way is right for that person."

Bethany announced that this year's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk in October will be her first event AC: After Cancer. Bethany says "I have walked this walk with you before. I have been in the window of Concord Hospital and watched all of you walk by. I have stood on the hill and cried the tears that you all cry.

"And now I want to remind you that what you are doing *does* make a difference. Even if I have never met you, you have carried me without even knowing it. Keep making strides, and I hope you smile and have fun and laugh out loud while you are doing it. Again, cancer is just a word, just like hope."

This year Bethany will walk in New York City with her new team, Laugh Out Loud, but Bethany will always be a Sarah's Soldier. Sarah was her cousin.

In 1996 Sarah Dodge Raney addressed 200 people at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk in Concord. She was 24 years old. Sarah was battling for her life in 1997, and she lost her battle with breast cancer in February of 1998.

In 1998, Sarah's mother, Donna Dodge, her sisters Cydney and Shannon, and her niece, Sadye, decided to walk as participants in Making Strides. When they arrived at the walk they were surprised to be among the 1,000 participants: Breast cancer affects far too many lives.

As they traveled the route, they came upon a walker with a paper pinned on her back that said, "I walk in Memory of Sarah Dodge Raney." Their Sarah. They decided to form Sarah's Soldiers to honor the memory of Sarah, and they began to recruit family and friends to walk in 1999.

In 2004, Donna lost her battle with breast cancer.

Through the years, Sarah's Soldiers has continued to make a difference in the fight against breast cancer as they continue to be one of the top fundraising teams in Concord. But the team's impact doesn't stop with the money; many members are on the planning committee and volunteer for the event. Sarah's sister Cydney chaired the event in 2001 and 2002. She is currently the Director of Survivorship.

Team captain Kimberly Laro says, "I couldn't think of a better person than Cydney to lead our survivorship outreach. I believe there are two ways you can be a survivor. You can survive the disease, or you can survive the loss. Cydney has survived the loss of her mother and sister, but she continues to make an impact."

"One of her favorite parts of the day," Kimberly continues, "is when they take the survivor picture. Each year the number of survivors continues to grow, and I'd like to think that our team has contributed to that in a small way."

As Cydney reflects back on the last 10 years that Sarah's Soldiers has participated in this event she says, "I thought to myself, how can we be sure Sarah's Soldiers isn't just about my mother and sister, but is about all those woman and men who are touched by this horrid disease. This is the year: Sarah's Soldiers will transcend yet again and allow others to feel part of something bigger than themselves."

Cydney says, "The key to the team's name is the word "soldiers," soldiers marching into battle. This day isn't about *one* person. This day is about *everyone* touched in some way by breast cancer."

On October 18, 2009 Sarah's Soldiers will continue their tradition, and we invite you to join the thousands of teams and individual participants to make a difference, to make history, and to make strides in the fight against breast cancer.

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