

## Women's Health: Take Time To Care



June 27, 2002

To Friends of Women's Health:

We invite you to become a member of the FDA/Office of Women's Health-sponsored "Pink Ribbon Sunday" Team. If you believe that early detection of breast cancer saves lives and you are willing to roll-up your sleeves to educate women in your community ... this program is for you! We are ready to help you find free materials.

**What Is Pink Ribbon Sunday** – It is a public education campaign that started in Houston, TX. Our FDA Public Affairs Specialist, Sheryl Baylor, co-sponsored educational activities with the local American Cancer Society in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The program encouraged minority churches to educate their congregations about the use of mammography equipment as an early breast cancer detection tool. Churches were empowered to develop their own activities, ranging from inspirational guest speakers... to table displays...to culturally appropriate educational material. Over the years support for this program grew to include 153 participating churches reaching approximately 110,000 women and their families in the Houston metropolitan area.

**What Other Communities Have Done** - Participating churches put together start-up kits which consisted of pink balloons, pink ribbons, pencils, breast cancer brochures, and a disposable camera to create a memory book for the church. In addition, each city established a planning committee and tailored its activities to meet the needs of their community. We provided the three cities with free educational materials. This FDA/OWH faith-based project later spread from Houston, TX to Washington, DC to Atlanta, GA to Dallas, TX. Here are some highlights from these cities:

**Washington, DC** – Held a long weekend of activities. On Friday and Saturday, Howard University Hospital's Cancer Center assigned physicians to participate on six radio talk shows. Listeners were able to call in to ask questions. Radio shows also alerted the city that it was Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In addition, October 19th was "Pink Ribbon Sunday" in 22 churches throughout the city.

**Atlanta, GA** - Started celebrating with a kick-off in August. A "Pink Tea" party was used to recruit planning committee members from churches across the city. In September, to build interest, a community parade was held for the purpose of promoting "Pink Ribbon Sunday" in October. The event featured a "Battle of the Bands", where mothers and grandmothers turned out to watch their children compete. A health fair and prayer breakfast were held. There was also an educational workshop that included the Governor of Georgia, Georgia's Director of Women's Health, The Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness and the FDA/Office of Women's Health. The Atlanta community held Breast Health Promotion events during the entire month of October.

**Dallas, TX** – Began its activities with an event titled "Gran Conferencia Espiritual y Concierto". Over 600 people from various churches throughout the area attended. This event was conducted by "Congregacion Hispana de Personas Mayores" a very active Hispanic/Latino Senior Citizen's community organization. This "grass roots" project established a partnership with "Congregacion", the American Cancer Society (ACS) and Parkland Health & Hospital System to leverage resources to reach the Hispanic/Latino church communities.

Messages about the need for early detection were discussed and delivered via flyers, pink ribbons, pamphlets, bags and fans. The fan was chosen since it is a traditional symbol in African American and Hispanic churches. On the front of the fans were choir figures, a large pink ribbon and the message, "Unidos En La Lucha Contra El

Cancer Del Seno” (United in the Fight Against Breast Cancer). The back entitled "Esperanza y Vida" (Hope & Life) contained more detailed messages about relying on spirituality to fight breast cancer. Hundreds of fans were distributed and used by all attendees, including men. A “Pink Ribbon/Tell-a-Friend” Clergy Luncheon was attended by sixty women. Pink ribbons, candles, flyers, balloons, pencils, bags, fans and brochures were given to participants wanting to conduct a “Pink Ribbon Sunday” observance in their church. The flyers and fans were translated and reproduced in Spanish for citywide distribution.

**This Guide** – Is a result of these activities. It was developed in response to requests from groups all over the country that asked for a basic how-to-guide for creating “Pink Ribbon Sunday” activities. We recognize that October is not the only time to deliver this message. We hope that your church will get involved and educate your community throughout the year. Many additional ideas and/or events that come naturally to churches can be done. We have included some of those year-round activities as additional suggestions.

**Benefits to Your Community** – Here are just a few.

- Reaching women and their families right where they live
- Developing new partnerships with groups like the American Cancer Society
- Creating a “Pink Ribbon Wave” of women and men educators and supporters
- Saving Lives

We encourage you to join our team and develop your own program. We look forward to hearing about your program and success stories.

Sincerely,



Marsha Henderson  
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June 12, 2002

Dear Friends:

My name is Zora Brown and I am a breast cancer survivor. Along with the 1.3 million other breast cancer survivors in the United States today, I am a living testament to the power of early detection and treatment of this insidious disease.

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women in the United States. Additionally, breast cancer had the highest number of new cases diagnosed last year and one in eight U.S. women, or 12.8 percent, will develop breast cancer during her lifetime. As an African American, this issue is of great importance to us as women, and to our families and communities.

Did you know African Americans are disproportionately affected by breast cancer and have the highest breast cancer mortality, relative to white women? We believe this is because a larger percentage of African American women are diagnosed with breast cancers at a later, less treatable stage. A mammogram is a safe, low-dose x-ray of the breast and reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer. It is important for women, particularly African American women, to get a mammogram. Remember, most women who do receive a mammogram will test negative for breast cancer. The odds are in our favor.

There is more good news. First, we know early detection saves lives and is the best way to detect breast cancer early. Second, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), under the Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA), a federal law that makes sure every mammography site meets quality standards, ensures the safety and quality of all mammography equipment in the United States. Third, federal and local government health agencies and community organizations are vigorously responding to this issue. Faith-based and church-affiliated organizations are an excellent example of community organizations finding ways to effectively respond to such an important community issue.

Rooted and centered in the Black church, African Americans have a strong legacy of fighting for civil rights, equality and freedom. The Church can continue this powerful legacy by encouraging breast cancer screenings, treatments and promoting awareness, education, counseling and support to persons affected by breast cancer. This may include offering referrals to local services for the congregation. The enclosed guide and video will give you more ideas on how you may incorporate these health messages into your worship services.

Thanks for allowing me to share my testimony and hopefully this will encourage you to motivate your congregation to share theirs too.

Sincerely,

Zora Brown  
Founder and Chair  
Breast Cancer Resource Committee



Queridas Hermanas,

Mi nombre es Lorena Fierro. A los 31 años fui diagnosticada con el cáncer del seno. Sobreviví a esta terrible enfermedad y soy testigo del poder que ejerce la detección temprana del cáncer. ¡Salvo mi vida!

Soy una en mas de un millón de mujeres que han sobrevivido al cáncer del seno en los estados unidos. Esto ha sido posible por la detección temprana seguida de un tratamiento adecuado e inmediato. Permitanme compartir unos datos importantes con ustedes. Creo vital e importante que sepan lo siguiente:

- El cáncer del seno es la forma de cáncer más comun entre las mujeres en los estados unidos.
- Fué el tipo de cáncer con el mayor numero de casos diagnósticados el año pasado.
- El cáncer del seno es el más comun entre las mujeres Hispanas.
- Entre la comunidad Hispana, es más común la detección del cáncer del seno en estado ya avanzado, cuando es mas dificil de tratar, a diferencia de otros grupos étnicos.

La mujer Hispana esta desaprovechando los exámenes de la detección temprana que están disponibles como la mamografía y el auto examen a nivel nacional.

Este asunto es de suma importancia para nosotras las mujeres que tradicionalmente jugamos un papel muy importante en nuestras familias y tambien en nuestras comunidades. Nosotras podemos hacer la diferencia. Hay que doblegar el miedo con una actitud positiva basada en información y responsabilidad para nuestra propio bien y el de otras.

Recomendamos a las mujeres de los 40 años y adelante hacerce un mamograma cada uno a dos años. Y recomendamos a mujeres de 20 años a 39 años obtener un examen de los senos por us medico cada 3 años. La mamografía (rayos-x del seno) detecta el cáncer del seno.

Usted puede tener confianza en la mamografía, la cual es regulada por la Administración Federal de Alimentos Y Medicinas (FDA), para asegurar la eficacia y la calidad de los aparatos especiales para las mamografías. Así pues, le aseguramos que su mamografía será de la mas alta calidad. Hoy más que antes, las mujeres estan viviendo su vida plena y activa despues de haber sufrido el cáncer del seno. Gracias a la detección temprana!

Agencias federales y estatales junto con organizaciones comunitarias, estamos respondiendo al problema entre la mujer Hispana y el cáncer del seno. Hay que organizarnos en las iglesias, en las escuelas y en nuestras comunidades para conducir una campaña para la detección temprana de esta enfermedad.

¡Compartamos este mensaje de vida y esperanza! Las invitamos a ustedes a trabajar junto con nosotros en la lucha contra el cáncer del seno para entregar un mejor futuro a nuestras familias y a nuestras comunidades.

Atentamente,

Lorena Fierro.

Voluntaria para la Asociacion Americana del Cancer.

## ***PINK RIBBON EVENTS***

*The pink ribbon is the symbol for breast cancer awareness.*

### **GET INVOLVED!**

About one in eight U.S. women will get breast cancer during her lifetime. You can help. You may even save lives.

How? By getting the church more involved.

Churches have always been a major source of education and support. Today, more than 180 million Americans – more than 7 out of 10 women – belong to a place of worship.

This is particularly true in African-American and Hispanic communities. Most women of color attend church or other worship services for comfort and guidance – especially during a health crisis.

As an active member of your church or congregation, you are in a wonderful place to help other women. We all need to learn more about breast cancer and take steps to protect ourselves. This guide tells you how to get started. You'll find three sections:

1. **An Overview** – what everyone should know about breast cancer and early detection.
2. **Energizing Your Members** – how to plan activities to increase breast cancer screening.
3. **For More Information** – where to go for more information about breast cancer services and support programs.

## ***SECTION 1 – AN OVERVIEW***

### **Who's at Risk of Breast Cancer?**

Every woman is at risk for breast cancer. It's the second most common cancer among women. A woman's risk for breast cancer increases if she:

- has reached the age of 50 (which is 75% of all breast cancer cases)
- has a close relative, like a mother or sister, with the disease
- started menstruating before age 12
- began menopause after age 55
- had her first child after age 30
- has never had children

What causes breast cancer? How can it be prevented? Unfortunately, we don't know the answers to these questions yet. But researchers are trying to find out if things like heredity, diet, lifestyle or environmental factors play a role.

### **Early Detection – The Best Protection**

We do know that early detection is the best defense. If you detect breast cancer at its earliest stage, the chance of successful treatment is much higher. That is why doctors, nurses and other health professionals strongly urge women to:

- See a doctor for a breast exam
  - women between the ages of 20 and 39 should have a clinical breast exam by a health professional every three years
  - women in their 40's and older should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years

- women who are at higher than average risk of breast cancer should talk with their health care providers about whether to have mammograms before age 40 and how often to have them

Please refer to the National Cancer Institute website ([www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)) for this information.

## **Common Symptoms**

Signs of breast cancer include any of these changes in the breast:

- A lump or thickening that won't go away
- A change in breast size or shape
- Swelling
- Pain
- Nipple tenderness
- Nipple fluid
- Skin irritation
- Puckering
- Dimpling

Most lumps are not cancerous – 80% are caused by other things. But to be safe, a woman should see a doctor right away if she finds any of these symptoms.

*Note: This advice applies to men too. Even though men are far less likely than women to get breast cancer, they can get it.*

## **The Good News About Mammograms**

A mammogram is a low-dose x-ray of the breast. It is both fast and safe. Many hospitals, clinics, x-ray centers and mobile vans offer mammograms.

A trained expert puts the breast between two plastic plates that gently spread it out. He or she then takes two pictures: one from above and one from the side. A special doctor, called a radiologist, then examines the pictures.

You should receive your results by mail within 30 days. If not, call the facility. Keep your original mammogram and use it if you get a second opinion from another doctor.

*Note: Tell the mammography staff if you have breast implants. These can make it more difficult for the staff to see problems in a mammogram.*

## **The Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA)**

All facilities that offer mammograms in the U.S. must meet high standards set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In fact, it's a law, called the Mammography Standards Quality Act (MQSA).

Always look for an MQSA certificate. It shows that the staff has completed special training and that the equipment has been properly inspected.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Service  
Food and Drug Administration

**CERTIFIED MAMMOGRAPHY FACILITY**

This certifies that

has complied with the requirements of the Mammography Quality Standards Act of 1992  
and is hereby authorized to perform mammography examinations, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 263b.

*Steven M. Casper*  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF FOOD & DRUGS  
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

*John J. McCarhan*  
DIRECTOR  
DIVISION OF MAMMOGRAPHY QUALITY AND RADIATION PROGRAMS  
CENTER FOR DEVICES AND RADIOLOGICAL HEALTH

Facility ID Number:  
Expiration Date:

Patients may report comments/complaints to:

FORM FDA 3402 (Rev. 5/02) THIS CERTIFICATE SHALL BE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED IN THE MAMMOGRAPHY FACILITY



## ***SECTION 2 – Energizing Your Members***

To get members of your church interested, try this two-step plan. First, do an activity to raise awareness of the basics (*topics in Section 1 of this guide*). Combine this activity with one of your routine activities like “Women’s Day”, health fairs, or workshops.

Then, do a follow-up activity in a more homey or comfortable setting. That’s when people can get more details on diagnosis, treatment, clinical trials and other topics.

### **Open the Discussion**

A regular worship service would be a good time to raise your church’s awareness of breast cancer. Start with your own church. Then branch out to others.

A brief talk can be a powerful way to get people interested. Ask the reverend or pastor to speak alone or try bringing in a guest speaker, like a breast cancer survivor, a doctor or a representative from a breast cancer organization.

When planning this activity, first speak with leaders of the church and gain their support. You’ll also want to ask these questions:

- What time is the service?
- Are there specific seating arrangements?
- What types of discussions are allowed during the service?
- When during the service will you or your guest speak?
- Who will introduce you or your guest?
- How much time will you be allowed?

You and the guest speaker should remain after the service for 20 to 30 minutes. This will give you the chance to greet members of the church, answer any questions and create interest in follow-up activities.

## **Follow-Up Activities**

The first discussion should lead to a more in-depth breast cancer education program. With proper advance notice, this can take place right after the service. Or it can be planned for another day. It should be well organized, informative and brief.

Arrive early to the follow-up activities to set up displays and pass out handouts, including brochures, buttons and/or bookmarks. Special pink ribbons are also a great idea – they are a symbol of the fight against breast cancer. To get these materials, contact your local hospital or any of the organizations listed in Section 3 of this guide.

Suggested topics for this activity include:

- Basic breast cancer information
- Early detection and mammography
- New advancements in detection and treatment

## **Encouraging Women to Get Mammograms**

Your church can use several methods to encourage women to get a mammogram, including:

- Posting a sign-up sheet for a group visit
- Setting up car pools so women can get to the facility more easily
- Organizing a visit from a mobile van that offers mammography
- Organizing a buddy system for emotional support

## **More Steps Your Church Can Take**

Some ideas to inspire your church to organize ongoing activities about breast cancer include:

- Inviting guest speakers
- Passing out breast cancer educational material, such as brochures and fact sheets
- Creating health fairs
- Planning special activities during breast cancer awareness month, such as organized walks
- Establishing support groups for patients, survivors and their families
- Providing members with individual counseling
- Helping breast cancer patients with daily chores, such as preparing meals, child care and, in some cases, paying bills
- Offering prayers
- Giving women information on how to get more resources  
*(see Section 3 of this guide)*

## ***SECTION 3 – FOR MORE INFORMATION***

Your church should be ready to point women in the right direction for breast cancer information and services. Here are some helpful resources.

### **Finding Mammography Facilities**

Women can find the nearest mammography facility with FDA approval by calling:

- The American Cancer Society (1-800-ACS-2345 or 1-800-227-2345)
- The Cancer Information Service (1-800-CANCER or 1-800-422-6237)

### **Finding Treatment Facilities**

The church should keep a list of the local hospitals, clinics and managed care organizations that provide the following services for women seeking breast cancer treatment:

- Biopsies and testing
- Surgical procedures
- Breast reconstruction
- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy

For free or low cost health services go to  
<http://ask.hrsa.gov/pc/>

## **Finding Support Programs**

In many areas of the U.S., women with breast cancer and their families can find a variety of support groups. For example, there are many hospital-based programs as well as local chapters of the following groups:

- Look Good...Feel Better (The American Cancer Society)
- Encore Plus Program (YWCA)

## **Helping the Needy**

The church breast cancer committee should keep a file on the treatment options that are available for women who are uninsured, underinsured and/or do not qualify for Medicaid or Medicare. This list might include volunteer doctors, local charities and other sources of help.

Some women might be eligible for a free or low-cost mammogram. Call your local hospital or clinic for more information.

***And don't forget to offer meals, babysitting, counseling and comfort for the entire family.***

## **General Resources**

It's worth making a connection with your local hospital or clinic. They can provide a wide range of materials and support. Keep a file of this information at your house of worship for quick reference – especially the useful phone numbers and Web sites.

At the national level, you'll find these resources helpful:

### ***The American Cancer Society***

- 1-800-ACS-2345
- [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- National Cancer Data Base (NCDB)

### ***The National Cancer Institute***

- 1-800-4-CANCER (The Cancer Information Service)
- [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)
- Physicians Data Query (PDQ)

### ***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention***

- 1-888-842-6355
- [www.cdc.gov/cancer/](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/)

*This guide is a project of:*

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and

**The Food and Drug Administration  
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<http://www.fda.gov/womens>

## **Acknowledgements**

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Most importantly we thank the hundreds of churches and their members who have conducted "Pink Ribbon Sunday" activities since its inception in 1996. They have worked in collaboration with the American Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Resource Committee, local hospitals, health departments and survivor groups. Working together we have formed an impressive team to reach women with the message, "Early Detection Saves Lives."