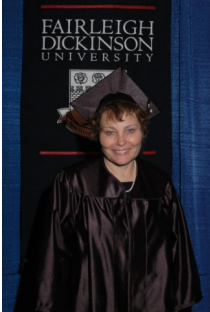


Sussex County Resident Achieves College Diploma while Battling Cancer



Eileen Bostonian has good reasons to monitor her health carefully. Heart disease runs in her family; she lost both of her parents to heart disease at an early age, and her sister had suffered a heart attack at the age of 42. Consequently, Eileen exercises regularly, follows a sensible diet, and faithfully receives annual check-ups, including mammograms. After

focusing so much on the threat of heart disease, she was shocked when a small lump in her breast was diagnosed as Stage Two breast cancer.

One out of eight women will develop breast cancer, yet like Eileen, the majority of them have no family history of the disease, making it all the more important for women to get an annual mammogram.

“Cancer does not run in my family and I had just had a mammogram 9 months beforehand,” commented Eileen. “I didn’t know what to expect, so I took 6 months off from work.” Eileen soldiered through eight rounds of chemotherapy, and more than seven weeks of radiation treatment. She somehow managed to complete two college courses and receive her diploma from Fairleigh Dickinson University at the same time. As with most patients, Eileen lost her hair as a result of her chemotherapy treatments. However, she bought a wig and stoically continued with school and eventually returned to work.

Sussex County has the highest incidence of incurable breast cancer in the state, primarily because the cancer is not being detected at its earliest, most curable, stage. In fact, while the mortality rate for breast cancer in the state of New Jersey dropped -8.9% from 1997 to 2005, mortality in Sussex County rose +9.5% during the same period.

Early detection is essential in the fight against breast cancer; the survival rate for women who detected breast cancer in its earliest stages has reached 98%. A mammogram is 85% - 90% effective at detecting breast cancer. Mammograms may detect breast cancer up to two years before they can be felt through clinical or self-examinations. Early diagnosis is the key to a cure, and urging women to get a mammogram can be the difference between life and death.

Free mammograms are offered regularly at Project Self-Sufficiency to uninsured and underinsured women over the age of 40 who reside in Sussex County, thanks to the support of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure North Jersey®. To conduct the tests, two

technicians with a state-of-the-art mammography machine set up shop at the agency’s Community Education Center. Women are examined discreetly and their test results are made available within days. In the past year, 150 women have been able to receive a mammogram through the program at Project Self-Sufficiency.

Eileen works as a telecom billing analyst for International Specialty Products in Wayne, New Jersey. The company has a comprehensive health plan, offers assistance with college education and even has a gym on site. Eileen likes her job and appreciated being able to take advantage of a long leave of absence, coupled with the other benefits. However, the long commute to Wayne from Sussex County each day had always prevented Eileen from participating in activities closer to home.

“I feel like I was in denial the whole time I was dealing with the cancer,” notes Eileen. “Then I went on vacation and while I was there I had a panic attack.” She decided to rearrange her priorities, attempt to volunteer more, and focus on other aspects of her life. She has arranged to volunteer during July at the Happiness is Camping summer camp for children with cancer which is located in Hardwick. “I’m looking forward to it. Maybe it will be like therapy for me, too.”

Project Self-Sufficiency, in conjunction with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure North Jersey®, Intercar Mercedes Benz, Sussex Honda, the New Jersey Herald, and the Sussex County Cancer Coalition have sponsored a campaign, “Mammograms Save Lives,” to underscore the importance of annual mammograms to the residents of Sussex County. The effort includes flyers, billboards and newspaper ads, along with a public relations campaign.

Free mammograms are offered frequently to uninsured and underinsured women over the age of 40 at Project Self-Sufficiency. The next available date for a free mammogram is Thursday, March 3rd, from 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Interested women are encouraged to call the agency at 973-940-3500 to make an appointment. In addition, Newton Memorial Hospital will provide a free mammogram for women who qualify through the Newton Memorial Hospital Foundation’s “Mammograms Save Lives” program. Those without health insurance are encouraged to contact Newton Memorial Hospital’s Education/Outreach office at 973-579-8340 for more information.

