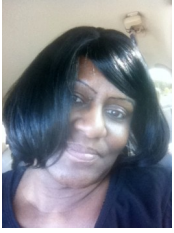


Positive Attitude Helps Breast Cancer Patient to Survive



Ethel Moricette and her nine sisters took pride in watching over each other during their childhood in Florida. As adults, the entire family continued to reside in Florida, offering each other support through various health complications and the eventual passing of their mother. A few years ago, Ethel made the difficult decision to move away from her family to start a new life with her fiancé in New Jersey. Shortly after landing in Sussex County and finding work, Ethel was horrified to learn that she had also found something else: Breast cancer. After noticing a lump in one of her breasts during a routine self-exam, she brushed it off as nothing. After all, a similar sensation in the past had turned out to be a harmless calcium deposit. Besides, this time around, despite working at two separate jobs, Ethel did not have health insurance. Consequently, she waited six months before seeking medical attention. By that time, the lump had swollen, and the pain was severe. Her physician recommended a mammogram and a biopsy immediately, and Ethel was diagnosed with Stage Two breast cancer.

“When I heard the ‘c’ word, I was terrified,” admitted Ethel. “When I called and told my family about it, they were worried because I was up here in New Jersey with no family.” Ethel’s large family had no history of breast cancer, although several other types of cancer were present in the extended family. One out of eight women will develop breast cancer, yet just like Ethel, the majority of them have no family history of the disease, making it all the more important for women to get an annual mammogram. 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 like Ethel, who are Sussex County residents over the age of 40. 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 few years, hundreds of women have received free mammograms through the program at Project Self-Sufficiency, thanks to the support of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure North Jersey®.

After her diagnosis, Ethel immediately started intense chemotherapy, followed by surgery and radiation treatment. “It was horrific. I lost all my hair, I was nauseous every day,” remarked Ethel. She soldiered through six months of chemotherapy and 29 daily radiation treatments.

Although she still faces reconstructive surgery, Ethel has now been cancer-free for exactly one year. “I am feeling really good and my doctors are really pleased with how things have turned out.” She is looking forward to going back to work, and she wants to encourage those who find themselves confronting a diagnosis of breast cancer. “I most definitely recommend getting a mammogram, and it’s very important to do self-exams, and get regular check-ups. You have got to stay on top of things. I would like to talk to women and men and encourage them to stay positive and to be strong. It’s not easy for people who don’t have anybody. The most valuable thing I took away from this experience was to get your check-ups, no matter what, and if you are diagnosed in time, breast cancer can be cured. You can get past it. You can beat it. You must stay positive. I’m a fighter.”

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.

Project Self-Sufficiency will be offering free mammograms at the agency in October. Interested women are encouraged to call the agency at 973-940-3500 to make an appointment. Free mammograms are also available through the New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJ CEED’s) program at St. Clare’s Hospital in Sussex. Interested participants are encouraged to call the hospital at 973-702-2740. 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.

