

# VOICES

OF THE AMERICAN  
CANCER SOCIETY  
Great Lakes Division, Inc.



Sharing Stories of Hope, Progress, and Answers Across Indiana and Michigan

v.24, October 2008

## LOCAL AREA SPOTLIGHT

Gerber Memorial Hospital and the American Cancer Society team up to host a Survivor Garden Brunch in Fremont, Michigan. Read more in this month's local area spotlight.

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## OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

Want to provide information and support to cancer patients face to face? Volunteer at a local ACS Cancer Resource Center! Located in communities throughout the Great Lakes Division, these centers provide books, videos, computers with internet access, and skilled volunteer assistance.

The American Cancer Society partners with community leaders to place these centers in host sites such as hospitals, clinics, libraries, and civic centers to provide easy access to patients, families, caregivers, healthcare professionals, students and the general public.

To find a Cancer Resource Center in your area, call your local American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

## RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

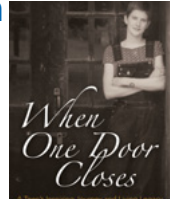
Although a cancer survivor looks forward to getting back to a "normal" life after treatment, the process can be challenging. Read tips on how to lead a healthy life after cancer (both physically and emotionally) in this month's resource highlight.

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## community focus and volunteerism

Q. & A. with Susie Graham: Co-Author of "When One Door Closes"

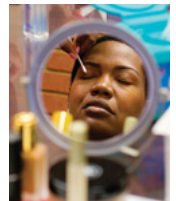
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### Q. & A. with Susie Graham: Co-Author of "When One Door Closes"

One early fall day in 1997, Alexandra (Alex) Graham came home from the mall complaining of pain in her knee. Three months later, at the age of 16, she was diagnosed with bone cancer. Even though she was fighting osteogenic sarcoma, the amputation of her leg, and partial loss of lung, this enigmatic teenager made a choice to define herself by who she is and the choices she makes, not by her illness. Over the course of a year, Alex did not get the miracle she wanted most...a cure. But her life and her selfless wish left the world a better place.

To continue her legacy, Alex's parents, Bill and Susie Graham decided to write a powerful book - "*When One Door Closes*" - about Alex's impact on others. In their own words, family, friends, medical experts, caregivers, and a rock star, tell us how Alex opened doors and made a difference in their lives. The book even includes testimonies from individuals who never met Alex, who share how their lives have taken on new meaning because of Alex's wish and legacy.

VOICES had the opportunity to interview Co-Author and mother of Alex, Susie Graham.

### What was Alex's wish? How do you think the book is going to aid her living legacy?

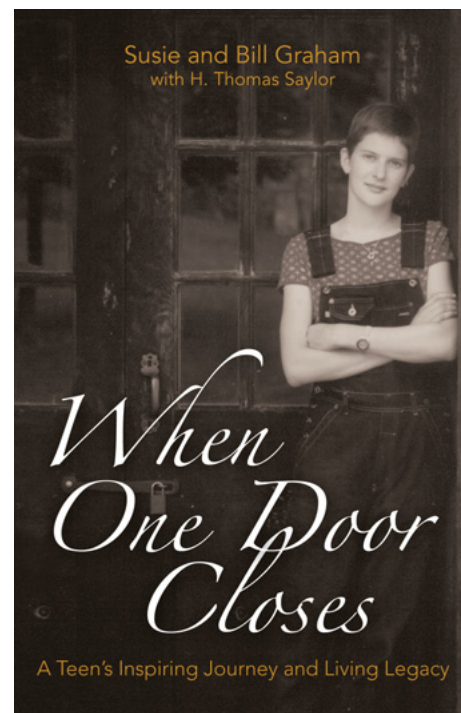
Alex went on a bus trip with some friends of hers who were also patients at the Rose Cancer Center in Royal

Oak, Michigan. She was incensed by the [people were treating] these children. Some of them were in wheelchairs, some had no hair, and some were still with their IV's (with doctors and nurses supervising). On the ride home Alex told her friends what her Wish was going to be if she got one. It would be to make a Public Service Announcement (PSA) - So early one December morning, nine children including Alex made this [powerful] PSA.

### You dedicated the book to the Make A Wish foundation and the American Cancer Society. How have these two organizations been helpful in "opening doors" for your daughter, your family, and others facing such circumstances?

Make a Wish came to our aid at a very difficult time. Her wish... took us away from the everyday trials of chemo, transfusions, and the very sheer terror that we were facing knowing that Alex had a life threatening illness. This special Wish has left a legacy of enormous proportions. It has changed so many people's lives and left us, her family, with a real sense that her life made a difference.

ACS came into our lives, unfortunately, after Alex died. If I knew then, what I know now, or so the saying goes. ACS gave our lives purpose. ACS let us, by organizing



and chairing the first Relay in our town, help others. We had been through the valley and we were now able give something back. ACS gave us those tools. In addition to working on Relay, I have been an advocate for ACS. I attended a Relay in Washington D.C. and met with some of our congressmen. I know I made a difference. I thank ACS for giving both my husband and myself the ability to get back on our feet and to work toward finding real solutions to end this cancer epidemic and by doing so, honor our daughter's memory.

### Why was it important for you and your husband to write this book?

There were so many stories [to tell]. So many people came up to us and

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told us of a remarkable experience they had with Alex...and it keeps growing. Right after Alex died, a good friend approached us and wanted to start a bicycle team to help raise money for kids with life threatening illnesses. That bicycle team, Team Alex has now provided 100 wishes to children which is approximately \$800,000. We also started a Relay in 1999 and we can boast of raising over two million dollars in the last ten years. There were so many stories of triumph associated with these two events.

But, most important, we wanted to continue Alex's legacy. We wanted to let people know that you can change the world no matter how much time you spend on this earth. We wanted to let people know that you do not have to be defined by your illness. And, we wanted people to know, that life goes on when you honor the memory of a loved one.

### **How much of an impact is this one book having on the community and beyond?**

Every person that reads the book feels strengthened by it. The book is set up in short stories. Each story has a life lesson and is followed by a quote of encouragement by a famous individual. It has meaning to both adults and teenagers. Several of the chapters were written by Alex's friends who at the time of her death were 16 and 17 [years old]. They give a very honest reveal of how they were feeling and what they were going through at the time.

### **What do you hope will be the impact of "When One Door Closes"?**

Our hope is that by telling Alex's story it will uplift people experiencing life-threatening illnesses or other trauma. And, to show that even in the light of a great tragedy, there is much an individual can do to elevate their life.



### **Is there anything you would like to add?**

My husband and I often ask ourselves what makes Alex so special? Aren't all children special? The answer that we always come up with is she inspired others by her actions to be the best they can be. She is the spark that ignites us all.

Pictured: Alex Graham on the cover of "When One Door Closes" ; Bill and Susie Graham (top right)

## • local area spotlight

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### ACS teams up with a local hospital in hosting a Cancer Survivor Garden Brunch

On Saturday, August 16, the American Cancer Society's Lakeshore Service Center teamed up with Gerber Memorial Health Services (GMHS) in Fremont, Michigan, to hold its first Cancer Survivor Garden Brunch. The brunch was created to honor Newaygo County cancer survivors and their caregivers, while giving them a platform to connect.

It was held on the patio of Tamarac, The Center for Health and Well-Being. A local nursery made donations of bushes, shrubs, and flowers to help set the "garden" theme of the event while a local restaurant provided a breakfast casserole, fresh fruit, and homemade muffins. Long stemmed red roses were handed out to all who attended as a thank you, and door prizes were being distributed throughout the morning.

Kim Wernstrom, ACS Community Program Manager and Kathy Evans, Specialty Services Director of GMHS worked with Stephanie Zinn, Marketing Manager of GMHS, Marianne Patten, Tricia Ferguson, and Karol Stalsberg to form a planning committee for the Cancer Survivor Garden Brunch. After many

months of getting together to plan the event, they were happy to see it had been a huge success.

"I can't tell you how very proud I was to be associated with such a lovely event on Saturday. The scene was so gracious and alive and welcoming, and I had the sense that our attendees were loving it," said Stephanie.

"The very hard work and attention to detail always pays off with something that runs almost flawlessly. And my hat is off to everyone who contributed. I believe we are on to something very special here and look forward to making it an annual occasion."

Brenda Delaney, Women's Health Coordinator for GMHS was pleased with the outcome of the brunch. "Special thanks to Kathy, Marianne, and Kim for their extra efforts in organizing this event. Thanks too, for all who gave up their time on a beautiful Saturday to provide a beautiful experience for all who attended. Such a great time! Thanks for including me as well!" She said enthusiastically.

After Brenda's statement, Kim felt it was the perfect time to recognize and celebrate Gerber Memorial Health Services by presenting them with the Five Star Community Investor Award and the Five Star Investor Award.



Over 70 people came to the Cancer Survivor Garden Brunch, and 65 surveys were gathered to chart the success of the morning gathering. 50 people wanted to be invited to the next survivor event, while six people stated they would like to help plan the next Survivor Brunch.

As for community involvement, 25 people wanted to get information on any cancer support groups that might be started in the community, and 14 people wanted more information on becoming an American Cancer Society volunteer or hospital volunteer.

The Cancer Survivor Garden Brunch was not only a way for survivors and caregivers to enjoy the company of others who share their experiences, but it became an event that led people to want to get more actively involved in their community. To learn how you can get involved, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

Pictured: Cancer Survivor Garden Brunch (top right); Survivors enjoying the brunch (bottom left)



### Volunteer making a difference through Look Good...Feel Better program

The success of the Look Good...Feel Better (LGFB) program rests on the shoulders of a dedicated nationwide team of almost 10,000 volunteers donating well over 40,000 hours of time a month. These volunteers provide their remarkable insights, creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication to make the program a meaningful experience to so many.

Look Good...Feel Better - in partnership with the American Cancer Society - is a free, non-medical, brand-neutral, national public service program founded in 1989, that teaches female cancer patients beauty techniques to help restore their appearance and self-image during chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Heather Boger of Vincennes, Indiana has been a volunteer cosmetologist with Look Good...Feel Better for about a year now. "I have a God gifted talent in cosmetology, so I decided that I'd like to do more for the community and for people that are undergoing cancer [treatment], and try to help them as much as I can."

All volunteer cosmetologists are trained and certified for LGFB locally by the American Cancer Society and participate in annual update courses. Volunteer beauty professionals like Heather lead small groups, usually consisting of six to ten women, through practical, hands-on experience.

At Look Good...Feel Better, women

learn about makeup techniques, skincare, nail care, and options related to hair loss such as wigs, turbans, and scarves. Each group program participant receives a free kit of cosmetics for use during and after the workshop.

"We just sit down and go through with them the different ways to approach putting makeup on. [We explain that] you don't have to do it just to look pretty, but also to fit in and to feel as normal as possible. We also discuss that by step, explaining what each thing in the packet is for."

Heather decided to get involved with the program because of the impact a young girl had on her when she was in high school. "[This girl] was diagnosed with cancer at a very young age so she's never had any hair. She still to this day doesn't, and she's going to turn 11 in October. But [I watched her] go through the hardest fight in cancer that a person can, and she survived it. And so, with the hope that she had, I kind of wanted to carry that on and share her story with other people."

Heather also participates in beauty pageants. She has been running for Miss Vincennes University for two years. The pageant requires a platform, something that the contestant does as a hobby, or ways that they help in their community. "It was per-



fect because my everyday platform, not just for beauty pageants, but my everyday platform is Look Good...Feel Better," said Heather. She has won two community service awards through the pageant.

Heather loves to give back. "Whenever you have a talent in life that you can help people that are struggling, do it...it's so worth it." To find out about classes being held in your area, or more about how you can get involved with the Look Good...Feel Better program, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit [www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org](http://www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org).

### Meet your researcher: Dr. Victoria Champion

The American Cancer Society is the nation's largest private, not-for-profit source of funds for scientists studying cancer. The Society funds researchers in every area of cancer medicine, including breast cancer, which is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women and ranks second as the cause of cancer death in women, after lung cancer.

The Great Lakes Division is currently funding 12 researchers in Indiana and Michigan who are conducting breast cancer research. These grants total more than \$6 million.

Dr. Victoria Champion is one of the researchers in the Great Lakes Division whose work is being funded. Her five-year grant began in 2004 and totals more than \$1.7 million. Dr. Champion has conducted cancer research for more than 20 years and serves as director of the cancer control program at the Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center in Indianapolis.

"Cancer research has always been a passion of mine, especially prevention and early detection," said Dr. Champion. Her previously funded studies include increasing mammography and colorectal screenings.

Dr. Champion recently completed her term as president of the Great Lakes Division's executive board

and is a study section member for the National Cancer Institute. She serves as the American Cancer Society's representative for the Governor's executive committee that directs Indiana's tobacco cessation program and is also a presidential appointment to the Center of Disease Control's Breast and Cervical Advisory panel.

Dr. Champion's current research compares younger and older breast cancer survivors' quality of life and compares the younger group to age matched controls that do not have breast cancer. Part of this innovative study includes data collection with partners of all groups to identify the unique problems experienced by family members, as well as the impact partners have on the overall adjustment of cancer survivors. Both younger and older breast cancer survivors are recruited through the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group. The study will provide information on how to best help younger women and their families when they experience breast cancer. Dr. Champion chose to research breast cancer because of its prevalence and impact, and because she has lost good friends to the disease.

"A lot of cancers strike people at older ages. Breast cancer hits women in the prime of their lives and that sparked my interest at looking at the differences between people who



were diagnosed at a younger age who are in the midst of rearing a family or wanting to have children versus those who are older," explained Dr. Champion.

Her research looks at several quality of life variables, such as physical function, cognitive functioning, depression, anxiety, spirituality, and health behaviors.

"There are a lot of differences between younger and older survivors that haven't been found before," said Dr. Champion, such as the importance of communication between young survivors and their diagnosing provider. Based on preliminary data analysis, Dr. Cleveland Shields and Dr. Champion are piloting an intervention to help younger survivors communicate better with their oncologists.

For more information on the Society's research program and funding, visit [www.cancer.org/research](http://www.cancer.org/research).

Pictured: Dr. Victoria Champion

### Breast cancer: types, treatments, and prevention

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in women and the second leading cause of cancer death in women after lung cancer. October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Great Lakes Division would like help you learn more about breast cancer and treatment options

The most common breast cancer is invasive ductal carcinoma (IDC), which accounts for about 80% of invasive breast cancers. IDC begins in a milk passage or duct and then invades the tissue of the breast. It can then spread to other parts of the body.

The most common noninvasive breast cancer is Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). DCIS means the cancer is confined to the ducts and has not spread into the tissue of the breast. Nearly all women with cancer at this stage can be cured.



There are several less common types of breast cancer. Medullary cancer accounts for about 5% of breast cancers. This special type of infiltrating breast cancer has a distinct boundary between tumor tissue and normal tissue. Other special features include large cancer cells and the presence of immune system cells at the edges of the tumor.

Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) is a rare type of invasive breast cancer that accounts for about 1-3% of all breast cancers. Usually there is no lump or tumor with IBC; instead, the skin of the breast will look red and feel warm, and have a thick, pitted appearance similar to an orange peel. The affected breast may become larger or firmer, tender, or itchy. IBC is often mistaken for infection in its early stages. It has a higher chance of spreading and a worse outlook than typical invasive cancers.

For more information about other types of breast cancer, visit [www.cancer.org/breastcancer](http://www.cancer.org/breastcancer).

When treating breast cancer, two or more methods are often used in combination. Surgical treatment may mean a lumpectomy, which is surgical removal of the tumor with clear margins, or a mastectomy, which is surgical removal of the breast.

Chemotherapy is the use of cancer-killing drugs that are injected into a vein or taken as a pill. Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays, such as x-rays, to kill or shrink cancer cells. Hormone therapy, such as the drug tamoxifen, is used to block the effect of estrogen or to lower its levels. Targeted therapy is another option that uses drugs, such as trastuzumab, to treat breast cancer.

Getting their annual mammogram is something women can do to save lives. The earliest sign of breast cancer is usually an abnormality detected on a mammogram before it can be felt by a woman or a health care professional. Mammography will detect about 80-90% of breast cancers in women without symptoms.

National Mammography Day is October 17. To help women choose the mammography facility best suited for them, ACS has developed guides that compare services, prices, and other information. Check out the 2008 Indiana Mammography Facility Guide at [www.cancer.org/indiana-mammogram](http://www.cancer.org/indiana-mammogram) or the 2008 Michigan Mammography Facility Guide at [www.cancer.org/michiganmammogram](http://www.cancer.org/michiganmammogram) to find a mammography facility in your county.

### Rally at the Capitol keeps the pressure on representatives to vote for smokefree air

As September began and the legislature returned from summer break, American Cancer Society volunteers from around the state gathered in Lansing, Michigan to remind legislators that it is time for all Michigan workers to be protected from secondhand smoke.

On Tuesday, September 16 at 12:30 p.m. nearly three hundred boisterous volunteers met at the Capitol rotunda and listened to speakers from around the state that included legislators, business owners, and medical experts.

Linda Burkett of Three Rivers, Michigan is the state Ambassador Constituent Team (ACT) lead for Michigan and a longtime ACS volunteer. "I thought the event was very informative and was presented very well." Linda said. "To me, it's a no-brainer that Michigan should go smokefree."

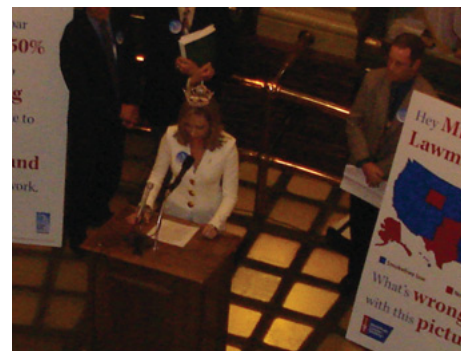
Supporters of smokefree air heard from Dr. Greg Holman, Chief Medical Executive for the State of Michigan,

Dr. Larry Abramson, medical expert and smokefree air advocate, Senator Ray Basham, Representative Andy Meisner, Ashley Baracy, reigning Miss Michigan and smokefree advocate, Daniel Haberman, owner of the Bosco bar in Ferndale, Michigan, and Dr. Ron Davis, Immediate Past President of the American Medical Association and medical expert who has worked on tobacco issues for more than 30 years.

Many speakers shared personal stories, concrete statistics, and examples of why it is time for Michigan to go smokefree. Along with the speaker program, participants crowded into the House gallery in a move designed to encourage Speaker Andy Dillon (D – Redford Township) to allow a concurrence vote on House Bill 4163.

A little while later, some volunteers met with their members personally to urge them to act to protect the health of Michigan residents. Linda was one of them. "I thought it was an awesome event and that it had some impact. If you don't get the message by now...something's wrong. Michigan is behind on things. We need to get this done."

On September 23, the House voted on HB 4163. Although a majority of representatives voted in favor of the bill, it did not pass because there were not 56 votes in support, the minimum



required for passage. However, there was a motion to reconsider the bill and it is possible the bill will be taken up again before the election.

The American Cancer Society will continue to work hard to make Michigan smokefree. If you want to get involved in this fight to make Michigan smokefree, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345, or visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org).



Pictured: Reigning Miss Michigan, Ashley Baracy speaks to volunteers and representatives (top right); Volunteers rallying for smokefree air in Michigan (bottom left)

## • resource highlight

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### Life after cancer

Staying healthy, both physically and emotionally, can be more of a challenge for survivors...especially if their lifestyle behaviors before cancer were not so healthy.

How was a person living before they knew they had cancer? Maybe they drank too much alcohol, smoked, ate more than necessary, or didn't exercise very often. Maybe they kept their feelings bottled up, or maybe they put themselves in stressful situations too long.

Now is not the time for survivors to feel guilty about their lives before cancer. They can start making changes today that can have positive effects for the rest of their lives. Not only will they feel better, but they will also be healthier. Positive thinking, an active life, and a fighting spirit help most people cope with cancer.

It may not always be possible for survivors to do things they did in the past, but there are usually ways to make each day count. Below are some lifestyle changes that cancer survivors should consider during and after treatment:

**Diet and Nutrition:** Eating right can be a challenge for anyone, but it can get even tougher during and after cancer treatment. For instance, treatment often may change your sense of taste, and nausea can also be a problem. One of the best things

a survivor can do is to put healthy eating habits into place. Encourage them to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day, to choose whole grain foods instead of white flour and sugars, and to try and limit meats that are high in fat.

They should also cut back on processed meats like hot dogs, bologna, and bacon, and limit alcohol consumption to one or two drinks a day at the most. If they need help quitting smoking, encourage them to call the Society's Quitline.

**Exercise:** Exercise can improve cancer survivors' physical and emotional health by:

- Improving cardiovascular (heart and circulation) fitness.
- Strengthening muscles.
- Reducing fatigue.
- Lowering anxiety and depression.
- Making people feel generally happier.
- Helping people feel better about themselves.

ACS recommends that adults take part in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity, above usual activities, on five or more days of the week.

**Emotional Health:** Almost everyone who has been through cancer can benefit from getting some type of support. What's best for an individual depends on their situation and personality. Some people feel safe in peer-support groups or education groups, while others would rather talk in an informal setting, such as church. Encourage the survivors in your life to get involved in the many programs and activities available through ACS.

With their experience, survivors can fight back and help others, while fulfilling their own lives. They can become a support to someone newly diagnosed in Reach to Recovery, or drive patients to and from treatment through Road to Recovery. They can also fight back by participating With the ACS Cancer Action Network, or in a local Relay For Life event where survivors are celebrated and honored. To learn more about the many volunteer opportunities, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345.

