

# VOICES OF THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

Great Lakes Division, Inc.



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

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## LOCAL AREA SPOTLIGHT

The Wabash Valley Area Service Center builds community relationships with their Wall of Hope banners.

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We need you to volunteer with our patient services programs! Learn more on the [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) homepage under "Support Programs and Services."

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## community focus

### Raising funds and awareness through Making Strides Against Breast Cancer

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer is an American Cancer Society non-competitive walk to raise awareness and funds to fight breast cancer. Money raised from Making Strides supports the American Cancer Society's lifesaving research, prevention, early detection, and support programs for thousands of patients and their families. This year, there are 12 Making Strides events taking place across Indiana and Michigan. Anyone can participate in these October events during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

#### Chase

Chase is a flagship sponsor for the Flint, Michigan, event. As a flagship sponsor, the bank is committed to recruiting at least 100 walkers and raising \$5,000 to fight breast cancer. "We wanted to bring awareness to the cause and to be a leader in the community," said Lisa McGuire, a Chase executive assistant and breast cancer survivor.

The Making Strides event brings together the area branches' employees, families, and friends in a common mission. "To me, it's a



Jamie Ferguson with her mother at Making Strides in 2004

bond among all of us," said Jamie Ferguson, a Chase branch manager. "It's a good feeling to know that everybody in our corporation is aware that we do this, they are happy that we do this, and when it does affect someone they know, there's someone to talk to. We're all fighting it."

Jamie, who didn't know about Making Strides before she came to work for Chase, has a personal connection with the fight against breast cancer because she lost her mother to the disease. "The best thing I've gotten out of it is that I'm not alone," she said, after being supported through the event by family, friends, and coworkers. She has also felt the community's support during past events. Flint residents around the walk route greet participants with lemonade stands, cookies, and cheers as they pass. "It will always be a part of my life," she said.

#### Vicki's Chickies

A group of family and friends are rallying around a special woman in their lives, Vicki Wishin, who is currently battling breast cancer, by forming a Making Strides team called Vicki's Chickies. Joined by Vicki herself, they will be at the starting line for the first time at this year's South Bend, Indiana, event. "I was really touched that Vicki joined our team. She is the one that we're doing this for and I think it really shows the positive energy that has helped with her recovery," said



From left are some members of Vicki's Chickies: Kim McNerney, Maura Frailey, Vicki Wishin, and Amanda Wishin.

Brenda Wishin, Vicki's sister-in-law, who also lost her mother to breast cancer. "It's really great to give her the support."

Vicki's Chickies is already more than half way to their \$1,500 goal, with the help of their Making Strides website. "I live in South Bend, but I have family all over," said Maura Frailey, who started the team and uses the website to raise awareness of the event and collect donations. "Most of us don't have time to knock on doors. Using the website and using e-mail has been a great help to us."

New members are invited to join the team, and Vicki's Chickies members encourage anyone who may be interested in Making Strides to get out there and do it. "Every little bit helps," said Brenda. "Anything anyone can do to help is important, it all adds up."

To learn more about Making Strides Against Breast Cancer and view Making Strides Online webpages to find your local event, visit [www.cancer.org/stridesonline](http://www.cancer.org/stridesonline).

## • local area spotlight

### The Wabash Valley Area Service Center builds community relationships

The American Cancer Society's Wabash Valley Area Service Center, located in western Indiana, worked with local businesses and organizations to develop positive relationships in their community. Because of this, the Society will have the ability to reach more people and was able to collect sponsors for their area's Wall of Hope banners.

The Wall of Hope was part of Celebration on the Hill 2006, the Society's Cancer Action Network's advocacy event that brought nearly 4,000 volunteers chosen as "celebration ambassadors" and thousands of others to Washington DC on September 19-20, 2006. The Wall of Hope, a monument made up of 5,000 banners representing different communities, was used to demonstrate the nationwide presence of the Society and urge the country's lawmakers to make cancer a national priority.

Each Wall of Hope banner represented one community with two local and three national sponsorships and hundreds of signatures. The Society hoped the immensity of the monument, which spanned four city blocks on the National Mall in DC, would help legislators recognize the thousands of people nationwide who care about cancer, but couldn't make it to the event.

The Wabash Valley staff organized sponsorships for 14 banners which



were featured at 14 different community events in the past five months. The events targeted topics such as: nutrition, anti-tobacco, physical fitness, cancer prevention, and early cancer detection.

"The banners helped gain support for ACS and let people know what we're doing and where the money is going. It validates our purpose and our mission," Julie Hansen, area executive director of the Wabash Valley Area Service Center, said.

"The community is very excited about signing the banners and having their name on them."

**A partnership with Clabber Girl**  
While organizing sponsorships, the Wabash Valley staff cultivated relationships with local companies, including Clabber Girl, a corporation based in Terre Haute, Indiana. The company, a corporate Society sponsor, is an international provider of

baking powder and other food products and has been involved with the Society for three years. It also fundraises for Relay for Life and lets Society staff use its facilities for meetings and luncheons.

Jamey Kirsch, Clabber Girl's executive director of IT, was presented with an opportunity to become involved with Wall of Hope through discussions he had as a Relay for Life committee member.

Clabber Girl was excited to be involved with the Society on the national level and decided to sponsor \$500 for a banner (pictured above). It was presented at a picnic, where proceeds went to Relay For Life and employees could sign it, and at a survivor's luncheon held in Clabber Girl's test kitchen. This event featured healthy recipes and another opportunity to sign the banner.

## • survivorship and patient services

### Breast cancer survivor reaches out to patients through Reach to Recovery

When Toni Freed was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer in 1995, she was worried about not living long enough to see her ten year old daughter graduate. Scared and without information, she went to her local American Cancer Society office and was asked if she would like to speak with a Reach to Recovery volunteer. Later that day, she got a phone call that changed her life.

Reach to Recovery is an American Cancer Society program designed to match breast cancer patients with breast cancer survivors who can offer stories of personal experiences, emotional support, and hope. Patients and family members can meet with a Reach volunteer in person or over the phone to ask questions, share concerns, and express feelings.

“One of my fears was that I would only be a cancer patient the rest of my life,” said Toni (pictured right). “This woman talked with me like I was a woman, not a cancer patient.” During the conversation, Toni realized that there can be life after breast cancer.



### A positive approach

It was the first time she could think of her diagnosis in a positive way. She credits this change in her attitude as the most important thing to her survival. “I went from being sure I was going to die to having hope,” she said. “Early on, I decided I wanted to help someone like that...I also need to let people know that you can have this disease and still have a good life.”

People who are interested in the Reach to Recovery program must wait at least a year after finishing treatment before they can begin training. This guideline is in place so that a person can focus on themselves during their cancer experience, and then be able to support the patient as a volunteer. Toni was anxious to start.

In her training, she learned about treatment options and what kind of conversations would be helpful to a new patient. “We’re trained not to give medical advice, not to second guess the doctors,” she said. Volunteers also have continuing education trainings. When volunteers are ready for their first patient visit, they are accompanied by a more experienced volunteer for support.

Toni was re-diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2001. Being back in the patient role, she put her volunteer work on hold, but enthusiastically returned to the program in 2005. She spoke as a survivor at her local Making Strides Against Breast Cancer event, where



afterwards she was approached by daughters of women she visited as a Reach volunteer. “It brought back to me why I’ve done this, that it has mattered in people’s lives,” she said.

Toni has become involved with other American Cancer Society programs, such as Relay For Life, as well as national and state advocacy events, but her main priorities stay on Reach to Recovery. “It has the possibility of changing attitudes the way it did mine,” she said. “I have such a high respect for the program and the women, my fellow volunteers.” She serves on a local executive board that advises how to revitalize Reach and bring it to the forefront of the community.

To learn more about the program, sign up for a Reach to Recovery visit, or join Toni as a volunteer call 800-ACS-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) to get in contact with your local American Cancer Society area service center.

### Researcher stays connected to a personal cause against cancer

Sheri Holmen, PhD, was studying biology in college when her mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. “That is what pushed me into studying cancer,” she said. Today she runs a lab as a junior investigator at the Van Andel Research Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funding from the American Cancer Society.

She works on glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), tumors that originate in the brain. GBMs are the most common of brain tumors and the most fatal. This type of cancer does not respond to surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy and, unfortunately, there has been little progress in treating it in the past 20 years. “There’s really no cure,” she explained.

#### The research

With her research team, Sheri (pictured right) is trying to develop new GBM treatments. Her strategy is to discover what feeds the tumor and then find a way to cut off that food supply. “We’re trying to find treatments that someone can take, just a pill for example, that only affects the tumors. We have to figure out what causes the tumor in the first place and what the tumor is dependent on.” Once it is known which molecular targets need to be attacked, her team can develop specific and effective treatments.

Sheri’s team has already made significant progress by identifying a target

which causes the tumor to retreat when blocked. “In our model we developed a cure,” she said, but now the next step is to identify additional targets so that the tumors will not have a chance to become resistant to one therapy and return.

“I’m very optimistic that we’re going to find some combinations and treatment strategies that are going to be directly crossed over in the clinic and start with clinical trials,” she said of her project.

#### Staying connected

Meanwhile, Sheri stays connected to her personal drive for research by talking to brain tumor support groups, clinical trial patients, and her mother. Sheri’s mother has been battling the disease with different types of cancer for 14 years. “It’s because of advancements in new treatments that she has been able to beat this thing over and over again,” said Sheri.

She also speaks publicly about her project at community events. “When you’re passionate about something, it’s pretty easy to get up there and convey that to everybody. I will be in cancer research for my entire career,” she said. Her next presentation will be at the American Cancer Society’s Great Lakes Cancer Symposium on October 16, held at the Van Andel Research Institute this year.



After speaking at her local Relay For Life event, Sheri was inspired to join a team with her daughter’s elementary school. Her favorite part is the luminaria ceremony, remembering the people that have been lost to cancer, and knowing that her team is working hard to increase survival for all those that are diagnosed.

Her Society grant will continue until 2010. During this time, she plans to make a difference in GBM treatment and, consequently, all tumor treatment. “We really feel that the discoveries that we make in glioblastoma can be applicable to a lot of other tumor types,” she said. “I think we’re going to make a lot of progress.”

## education

### Arabic women educate each other about early detection with Tell A Friend

A woman giving other women advice is a familiar concept, one that the American Cancer Society is harnessing with a program called Tell A Friend. In this program, women are trained to talk with others about breast cancer screening and early detection. The trainees then go out in the community and ask their friends and family to get mammograms and spread the word.



In 2004, this “peer counseling” strategy was introduced to the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in Dearborn, Michigan, which has the largest Arab-American population in the country. The community center provides a medical lab, pharmacy, clinic, mental health, social services, and more to everyone in the surrounding area. Working with the local American Cancer Society area service center in metro Detroit, they tested the waters with Tell A Friend by asking 20 women to participate.

Hiam Hamade, RN, who works with ACCESS as the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program outreach coordinator, recruited and trained the women from different Arabic countries to get a cross section of the population. These women were then charged with going out in the community to educate five other women.

#### **An educational program to fit the culture**

Arabic people are most comfortable getting information from someone they know, so the Tell A Friend program is a good fit for their culture. The Arabic population in Dearborn has a lower level of education than the general population and cancer is rarely discussed. Women’s modesty is held in high regard, making breast and cervical cancer sensitive subjects. However, through the Tell A Friend program, women assured each other that only other women would perform the cancer screenings. “They trust each other,” explained Hiam. “Once someone in the community tells them something, they take it into consideration and then apply it.”

As women in the community spread the word, some began to even approach ACCESS, asking for information and screenings on their own. “Before, I went door to door,” said Hiam. “Now I find the program is so successful, I’m receiving calls.”

ACCESS is equipped to meet their requests with American Cancer Society brochures translated in Arabic and English, and a mobile mammography unit that can travel to surrounding areas.

As a result from additional Tell A Friend groups, ACCESS reached 2,000 women with early detection education last year. Roughly 1,500 received breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screenings, either with their own insurance or through the federally and state funded Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program. For most women, it was their first cancer screening.

ACCESS is also partnering with the American Cancer Society on other initiatives, such as Colorectal Awareness Networks, to reach out to people with colorectal cancer information, and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. Their director, Adnan Hammad, is on the American Cancer Society Great Lakes Division’s Board of Directors.

Ms. Hamade recommends any minority population to try Tell A Friend, and would be happy to help other areas begin the program. “The only thing they need is someone to start,” she said.

To learn more about Tell A Friend, log on to [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or call 800-ACS-2345.

### Why the Society does not support every smokefree law

It may seem contradictory when the American Cancer Society does not support a smokefree law, but not all that are proposed will be effective. In fact, supporting an ineffective smokefree plan can actually prevent future progress for an area's smokefree status by creating more ground to cover later. The Society bases its support on whether or not a proposed law meets the standards from the latest Surgeon General's report, published in June.

This report stated that there is "no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke." In other words, the only effective way to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke is to completely abolish indoor smoking.

Following these guidelines, the Society views the most ideal smokefree law as one that causes every public place, including restaurants and bars, to become 100 percent smokefree at the same time. However, some smokefree proposals have amendments that cause the plan to not meet the standards of the Surgeon General's report, such as allowing public places to have smoking rooms or ventilation systems. When these deal breakers come into the picture, the Society recognizes the plan as ineffective and will not give support.

Sometimes, these laws pass because elected officials may not have time to be educated about the facts. "With good intentions, they want to accommodate everybody, without realizing that they aren't protecting health," said Matt Phelan, the American Cancer Society's smokefree air specialist for the Great Lakes Division.

#### **West Lafayette's battle for smokefree legislation**

West Lafayette, Indiana, had its own battle with a smokefree law this past spring. The law failed in the first City Council vote, without support from the Society because of its deal breaker amendments.

Two months later, the City Council revisited a new version of the law. This time, it was a comprehensive proposal. It gained support from the local tobacco coalition and Purdue University's chapter of Colleges Against Cancer (CAC), a collaboration between the college and the American Cancer Society.

Julie Johnstone, a founder of Purdue's CAC chapter and cancer survivor, joined other members in writing Letters to the Editor for local publications, e-mails to Council members, and speaking at City Council meetings. Because CAC encouraged members to write e-mails to Council members, over 300 people voiced their opinions.



As a direct result, two Council members changed their vote to support the law.

Donna Morgan, CAC's advocacy chair, also got involved to protect the public, including restaurant and bar employees, who are faced with the life-threatening danger of secondhand smoke as a job requirement. People who work in the food service industry are 30 percent more likely to develop lung cancer, mostly because they are exposed to smoke regularly during their work day. "It's important to protect people from secondhand smoke when they don't have a choice about it, if someone has to work for eight hours a day in a smoky bar," she said.

In its second vote, the City Council passed the law to make all public places, workplaces, restaurants, and bars smokefree starting July 1, 2007. To date there have been 26 smokefree laws passed in Indiana and 17 in Michigan.