



“This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP). This landmark federal legislation, establishing programs in 68 states, territories and tribes, targets uninsured and underinsured women who are particularly vulnerable to health disparities due to breast and cervical cancer. Across the nation many great success stories are shared, but the work is not yet done. With the economic downturn over the past three years, many programs now find themselves stopping screening and putting women on wait lists, as resources are limited. The need for services, including support services that address health disparities, like patient navigation and case management, has significantly increased due to women losing jobs that provided health insurance.”

NBCCEDP Council

Elveta's Story

Elveta Verhoeve is a 44-year-old Caucasian woman from Virginia who has been married for 19 years. She has a 16-year-old child whom she home schools and is not employed outside the home.

Elveta never had a mammogram, but her mother's breast cancer diagnosis in July 2009 forced her to take a serious look at her own breast health. Although Elveta has health insurance through her husband's employer, mammograms are not covered on their plan, and the deductible was too much for her to afford.

She called her local cancer center to find out where she could have a free mammogram. The cancer center referred her to a local hospital, where she was told there was a program that

could assist her. Elveta called Every Woman's Life and was given a pre-screening interview, followed by a full screening interview. She was told that a cervical cancer screening would take place first, and that she would have the mammogram at a later date. Since there was a clinic in her area only once a month, she had to wait a few weeks for her first appointment.

About three weeks after her cervical cancer screening appointment, she received a letter stating that her results were negative. Elveta then scheduled her mammogram, which was done at a different location. She was relieved to find out that her mammogram screening showed no abnormalities.

Elveta plans to use the Every Woman's Life services on an annual basis, and has spread the word among her friends that such an important program is available to eligible women who want to take charge of their health and stay well. (Elveta is pictured right.)





Improving Outreach and Education

Raising awareness about the importance of breast and cervical cancer screening and community outreach programs is important to reducing disparities. The NBCCEDP helps increase awareness by ensuring education efforts are culturally competent and easily understood and by bringing cancer education and screening services directly to medically underserved women using peer networks and community health liaisons. By using community liaisons, the NBCCEDP can help empower women in hard-to-reach populations to get screened and improve awareness.

Ernestine's Story

Ernestine Brooks is a 56-year-old single African-American woman with two adult children, ages 37 and 35. Since 2000, she has been working full time as a child care provider in her home in Virginia. Being self-employed, she receives no health insurance benefits. Her average monthly income is less than \$1,000, which leaves her unable to purchase an affordable insurance policy.

For many years, Ernestine has had frequent breast lumps, which prompted her to seek out medical attention when she was only in her 20s. At that time, her employer provided health insurance and she was able to access mammography services easily on a regular basis. On two occasions, her mammograms showed potential abnormalities, which required biopsies. Ernestine was relieved to find that both biopsy results were negative.

Not long after that, Ernestine lost her health insurance benefits. She heard about Every Woman's Life through a neighbor and promptly called for an appointment. Enrollment in the program proved to be a simple process. During the first phone contact, Ernestine discovered that she met program eligibility requirements and scheduled her first appointment.

Over the nearly 10 years that Ernestine has been enrolled in Every Woman's Life, she has been pleased with the services she's received. She believes she has received "wonderful care" and that the staff "treats me like a special person." She appreciates the fact that the facility is convenient to her and that she is sent a reminder each year to schedule her annual appointment.

Ernestine never misses an opportunity to tell her friends and family about the valuable and potentially lifesaving services Every Woman's Life offers. Her hope is that all women who are eligible for the program will take the time to care for themselves by getting regular breast and cervical cancer screenings and stay well.

"As a breast cancer survivor, I know the importance of regular screenings. American women shouldn't die from cancer because they struggle to afford screenings or access to treatment. I'm proud of the program, and prouder still those women who are screened and learn that they have cancer can get the treatment they need to get healthy."

*Congresswomen Sue Myrick
North Carolina (9th District)*