

**Cancer:**

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and to spread awareness,” Baker said.

The Umatilla Chamber of Commerce is selling pink patch shirts in honor of Huxel, Baker said, and all the proceeds go to the Kick’n Cancer New Beginnings Program out of Pendleton.

Caitlin Cozad, marketing and communications director for Good Shepherd Health Care System, said awareness and early detection are crucial to breast cancer care.

Good Shepherd patient and breast cancer survivor Michelle Little agreed that it is important for women to get annual mammograms and perform self-breast exams often.

“I am fortunate to have Dr. Leila Keeler as my OB/GYN at Good Shepherd Women’s Center, who understood the importance of annual women’s exams and mammograms,” Little said.

Little said breast cancer does not run in her family and she went two years without a mammogram or an annual well-woman exam until her daughter, who works at the Good Shepherd Women’s Center, encouraged her to make an appointment.

“At my appointment, Dr. Keeler suggested I have a mammogram since it had been so long since my last one. I’m thankful she suggested having it done because the mammogram detected early breast cancer,” Little said.

Between her mammograms and the biopsy, Little said she looked closer and noticed a small indent on the underside of her breast, which happened to be the side that the cancer was detected.

“The care I received from Dr. Keeler and the entire Women’s Center staff during my journey

**“BEING BREAST AWARE BASICALLY MEANS KNOWING HOW YOUR BREASTS FEEL AND LOOK SO THAT YOU CAN BE AWARE WHEN SOMETHING CHANGES.”**

Cynthia Hodge, an advanced registered nurse practitioner at Mirasol Family Health

was beyond exceptional,” Little said. “Dr. Keeler answered all of my questions and gave me peace of mind and I understood what was ahead of me.”

Little said her treatments included surgery to remove the cancer and 30 rounds of radiation, but she didn’t need chemotherapy.

“My breast cancer treatment was minimal due to early detection,” Little said. “I’m thankful for the relationship I had built through this journey with Dr. Keeler and the Good Shepherd Women’s Center staff.”

Cynthia Hodge, an advanced registered nurse practitioner at Mirasol Family Health, said her clinic recommends biennial breast cancer screening for women at 50 years of age; however, for women who have increased risk of developing breast cancer, they may need earlier screening.

“It is a good idea to discuss these risks with your medical provider to have an individualized screening plan created,” Hodge said.

Women have long been told to do self-examinations to detect abnormalities. Hodge said although monthly breast self-examinations are no longer recommended, evidence on the frequency of self-detection of breast cancer provides a strong rationale for women to be breast aware.

Hodge said, “Being breast aware basically means knowing how your breasts feel and look so that you can be aware when something changes.”

While early detection is key to improving survival rates, Hodge said women can work to prevent getting

cancer by living a healthy lifestyle. She said according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, research has shown that being overweight can increase the risks for certain cancers, including breast cancer.

“We recommend a healthy lifestyle to maintain a healthy weight,” Hodge said.

When women do get breast cancer, Hodge said the treatments have greatly improved over the past several decades. She said the implementation of genomic testing has improved both screening guidelines and treatment protocols.

“It is now known that breast cancer can be divided into subtypes that respond differently to various types of treatment,” she said.

Overall, Hodge said, breast cancer mortality has improved during the past 30 years, which can be attributed toward improvements in treatment and earlier detection.

At Tri-Cities Cancer Center in Kennewick, Washington, Ken Gamboa, director of marketing and business development, said things looked different for Breast Cancer Awareness month this year.

“We typically hold large events for education and awareness,” Gamboa said. “This year almost everything was online.”

Overall, Gamboa said, the cancer center — which has an office in Hermiston — is promoting the importance of patients getting in to their doctors for their cancer screenings.

“Many have held off due to COVID-19,” he said.

The one event held this

year was on Oct. 22 when the center hosted an online community education event, “Breast Cancer — Awareness Can Equal Prevention.” Gamboa said the session was recorded and will be available on the center’s website.

For the center, every day is focused on cancer aware-

ness, including breast cancer. Its mammogram coupon program is available at any time and offers free screening or ultrasounds for uninsured women, per a referral from a primary care physician.


To help fund mammograms, the center has a partnership with Speck Family Dealerships in the Tri-Cities called “Drive for a Cure.” For every new car sold, the dealership donates a mammogram for a woman in the area.

The Tri-Cities Cancer Center offers information to keep patients safe, including brochures, hats

and scarves, available for curbside pickup, and is able to assist with mastectomy bras and breast prostheses. Gamboa said if patients from Hermiston need resources or information, in many cases they can be brought on Mondays when its satellite office is open on the Good Shepherd campus.


Another ongoing program is the center’s virtual Breast Cancer Support Group that meets the first and third Friday of each month from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. To join, call the center’s patient navigator, Cindy, at 509- 737-3418.

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