

SCHA and St. Mark United Methodist Church: A Series of Hope



The South Carolina Hospital Association Foundation and the St. Mark United Methodist Church of Taylors, SC have partnered on a video series that aims to improve health by increasing health awareness in communities of color. It's well documented that heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and stroke are the leading causes of death for Black Americans. Black communities often have more limited access to healthcare resources and education that create an environment of openness and acceptance to discuss these critical health issues. A Series of Hope wants to change that with a video series that can be used in discussions with local churches, schools, health clinics, and other community organizations.

Part 1: Cancer

- Black people have the highest death rate and shortest survival period of any racial group in the US for most cancers.
- Prostate cancer is the most diagnosed cancer among Black men.
- Breast cancer is the most diagnosed cancer among Black women.
- Cancers of the lung and colon are the 2nd and 3rd most diagnosed cancers in both Black men and women.

Real Stories of Hope:

Shelia Bradley, Age: 65 - Shelia's cancer story begins in 1997 when she began to lose her appetite and feel tired almost every day. After more than two years trying everything from iron injections to monthly blood transfusions, a series of tests and scans revealed Shelia was suffering from small bowel cancer – a type so rare at the time, less than 50 people had it. With her faith as a guide, Shelia's surgery was successful and was followed by six months of chemotherapy. Today, she is 22 years cancer-free. This is the story of Shelia Bradley.

Solomon Bradley, Age: 67 - Solomon Bradley is the first to admit that talking about his cancer diagnosis isn't easy. He had no idea that participating in a local community event to raise awareness for Prostate Cancer would result in a postcard in the mail telling him to follow up with his doctor. After tests and a biopsy confirmed the diagnosis of prostate cancer, Solomon took an active role in his care and treatment and discovered he had family members with the disease. Now, he is cancer free and ready to share his journey. This is the story of Solomon Bradley.

Rosylin Weston, Age: 62 - In the Spring of 2015, Rosylin Weston was diagnosed with Stage III Breast Cancer. After two surgeries, eight rounds of chemotherapy and 33 rounds of radiation, Rosylin was declared cancer-free and made it her mission to share her journey with anyone who would listen. In the fall of 2019, the cancer returned, but this time it's metastatic. There will be no bell ringing and declaration of being cancer-free – its terminal. This is the story of Rosylin Weston.

Eugene Smith, Age 65 - As a young man, Gene Smith threw a quarter in front of a moving car filled with the prettiest women he'd ever seen, and they stopped, and he arranged a date. His wife Kappa says he's still "a bit" of a playboy, but after being diagnosed with colon cancer from a routine coloscopy he learned valuable lessons that have made him more attentive to his health. He considers himself one of the "lucky ones" because his cancer was found early and now, he eats healthier and exercises regularly. This is the story of Eugene Smith.

Discussion

The primary purpose of a Series of Hope is to increase the awareness of the greatest health challenges in communities of color and encourage early detection and prevention efforts. For this exercise we are encouraging others to use the video series as a guide and consider the questions below as you host an open discussion about the burden of cancer on Black Americans:

- Did you identify with any of the stories shared in the video?
- Do you have any family members that have been diagnosed with cancer?
- Did you know that some cancers are passed through generations of a family?
- Have you looked into the cancer prevention screenings and tests appropriate for your age?
- Did you know that diet and physical activity affect your risk of cancer?
- Have you had a conversation with your doctor about potential cancer risks and healthy behaviors for cancer prevention?
- Do you have a doctor you see regularly?

If you need help with accessing cancer screening resources or finding a primary care doctor, AccessHealth SC may be able to help. Contact us at AccessHealth SC - South Carolina Hospital Association (scha.org) or 803-744-3556.