



Fearless Warrior luncheon raises breast cancer awareness

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Athens, Ga. – Inspired by words of strength, humor and Southern charm from keynote speaker Barbara Dooley, St. Mary's Fearless Warriors Pretty in Pink Luncheon on Oct. 10 celebrated breast cancer survivors and raised awareness of the fight against the disease.

"This special luncheon is dedicated to honoring breast cancer survivors and the incredible journey of hope, healing and empowerment that they are on," said Dr. Kathleen Jeffery, medical director of St. Mary's Breast Health Center and lead organizer of the event.

The luncheon took place at The Chapel on Prince Avenue as a celebration of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. More than 100 breast cancer survivors, family members, friends, other loved ones and health care staff attended.

Dooley and Dr. Jeffery noted that breast cancer takes an enormous toll on Americans. Citing the American Cancer Association (ACS), they shared that breast cancer directly impacts about 1 in 8 women over the course of their lives, with invasive breast cancer leading to the death of 1 in 43 women. The ACS estimated that in 2024, new invasive breast cancers would be diagnosed in 310,720 women, and 2,790 cases would be diagnosed in men, with the disease claiming the lives of 42,250 women and 530 men.

The ACS also reports that the incidence of breast cancer increased about 1 percent per year over the decade from 2012-2021, "with a steeper increase among women younger than 50 years (1.4% per year) than in those 50 or older (0.7% per year)."

The good news is that the 5-year survival rate has risen to 99% for breast cancers diagnosed at a localized stage, when treatment is generally most effective and less expensive. However, that high survival rate drops to 87% for cancers diagnosed after they have spread to nearby tissues, and 32% when breast cancer metastasizes to parts of the body far from the initial site.

"What this means is that it is vital we diagnose breast cancer in its early stages, before it spreads," Dr. Jeffery says. "The best way to detect early-stage tumors is with regular self-

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exams and annual mammography screening, combined, when needed, with additional testing for women with dense breast tissue or whose family history indicates that they are a candidate for genetic testing.”

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Survivors and supporters gather with Dr. Jeffery (back row, 5th from left) and Barbara Dooley (back row, center) for a photo after the luncheon.