

# Community Connections



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

Issue 4, July 2020

## SUMMER HAS OFFICIALLY ARRIVED

We have moved from winter to spring and now summer living. These past few months have delivered a flurry of activities and emotions amid new norms.

July is “Family Reunion Month,” along with “Park and Recreation Month.” Parks and greenspaces provide perfect locations for families to come together while practicing safe social distancing.

Also, during this time together, let us get to know our family health history. Many chronic diseases, including cancer, have increased risk because of family history. Although many may not know all there is to know about the intimate details of



family members, let us make sure that we can learn as much as we can about our family health history. This is important, not only for our personal health but also for generations to come.

Be sure to take a little time off in July to vacation or “staycation” right at

home. Either way, July is a great time to recharge and spend a little extra time with yourself and your family. P.S. Be sure to take advantage of a local park and enjoy a summer picnic with the ones you love. Until next time,

– *Claudia*

## O'NEAL COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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## Family Medical History

N	O	I	S	N	E	T	R	E	P	Y	H	E	R
N	R	S	S	I	A	E	O	E	R	C	E	R	E
R	S	R	O	T	C	A	F	K	S	I	R	E	C
R	O	T	C	O	D	Y	L	I	M	A	F	C	N
R	O	A	E	O	S	S	H	T	N	E	S	N	A
C	O	L	O	N	O	S	C	O	P	Y	S	A	C
I	C	R	Y	O	E	Y	T	S	A	E	R	C	E
S	O	R	Y	E	B	E	Y	E	A	R	I	T	T
C	S	G	D	D	N	E	L	A	I	O	O	S	A
R	E	E	E	O	A	C	S	M	T	S	O	A	T
R	Y	S	D	A	R	E	O	I	E	I	M	E	S
R	D	I	A	B	E	T	E	S	T	E	K	R	O
I	M	A	R	G	O	M	M	A	M	Y	T	B	R
I	H	E	A	R	T	D	I	S	E	A	S	E	P

FAMILY DOCTOR  
BREAST CANCER  
PROSTATE CANCER  
HEART DISEASE  
HYPERTENSION  
OBESITY  
RISK FACTORS  
DIABETES  
COLONOSCOPY  
MAMMOGRAM

# DR. MONICA BASKIN ON FOX6



Dr. Monica Baskin was recently a guest on a popular morning show to describe efforts to reduce prostate cancer disparities among African American men.

Baskin, associate director for Community Outreach & Engagement at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB, appeared on WBRC Fox6's

Good Day Alabama on June 17, where she was interviewed by Jeh Jeh Pruitt about a new grant from the Mike Slive Foundation.

Through the grant, the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement is working on a project to develop culturally appropriate ways to increase prostate cancer screening rates among African American men

between the ages of 35 and 70.

The need is clear. Baskin explained that African American men die of prostate cancer at a rate 2.5 times higher than that of their white counterparts.

The initiative will focus on four counties in Alabama: Jefferson, Dallas, Macon and Butler.

In all, it will reach 144 people, including 120 men and 24 of their spouses and partners.

The study will identify barriers to screening for prostate cancer. The information gathered from the study will then be used to increase knowledge and improve attitudes toward prostate cancer screening.

## FAITH IN ACTION: MISS. COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROVIDE FOOD AND VITAL COVID-19 AWARENESS



Members of Cistern Hill Missionary Baptist Church joined community partners near Como, Mississippi, on June 16 to serve about 250 families during a recent community food distribution. In addition to food, residents were given educational information about COVID-19 from the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, arranged by Panola County Coordinator Annie Perry-Smith.

Community partners, including the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and the Maddox Foundation, provided food, while the Emily Pointer Public Library gave away free books. Continuing the theme of promoting COVID-19 safety, the Mississippi State NAACP furnished face coverings to encourage vigilance in the fight against the pandemic.



Tara Bowman (right) with her father, Joseph Henry Bowman III (left). Her father died from lung cancer in 2016.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

# TARA BOWMAN: EMPOWERED BY LOSS, COMMITTED TO CANCER EDUCATION

Tara Bowman knows the statistics by heart. She can also recite health manuals from memory when it comes to cancer awareness, health disparities and the need for early screening and treatment.

Bowman's own family history is a painful lesson about the urgency of cancer screenings and health awareness that she generously shares.

"I do it both from the book and, personally, from the heart," said Bowman, program manager in the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. "When you are real with people, they listen to you better."

Bowman knows the devastating effects of cancer at the deepest levels, including the deaths of her own father, stepfather, stepmother, aunt and uncle. Each loss occurred within three years, between 2015 and 2017. She once flipped through her calendar and was shaken by all the notations made for funerals within such a short time.

Bowman is not defined by her loss. Instead, she has become empowered by it in her daily mission to provide essential information to help save lives.

"At first, it made me numb," she said. "At the same time, it gave me an internal drive for the job

that I was doing. When I started telling people about my stories, they wanted to know in detail what happened. They wanted to know more about it, and that has led to them wanting to get screened."

Bowman's official job title understates her multiple roles in the office where she works with individuals to lessen and remove barriers related to cancer screenings. She is responsible for the development and implementation of several cancer outreach and research programs that focus on increasing cancer screening and healthy lifestyle efforts.

Bowman is especially passionate about creating awareness about lung cancer, the illness that claimed the life of her father, Joseph Henry Bowman III, who died in 2016. Her father's death came just six weeks after her stepfather died from bone cancer following bouts with prostate and throat cancers. On June 16, Bowman participated in the 2020 Virtual Lung Cancer Voices Advocacy Summit, where she helped deliver messages to members of Congress about the importance of federal funding for lung cancer research.

"Our voices were powerful, and without a doubt, our personal stories helped their offices understand what it's like to live with or care for someone with lung cancer," Bowman



said. "My drive now is to get as many people screened for all of these cancers because early detection saves lives."

Bowman manages six coordinators who oversee more than 178 Community Health Advisors (CHAs). She also coordinates 44 CHAs herself in Jefferson County.

Claudia Hardy, program director of the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement, called it remarkable that Bowman can channel her own family loss into an even greater determination to promote cancer awareness.

"Tara is a good health educator because she knows the information and how to deliver it to audiences of all sizes and varieties," Hardy said. "What makes her an exceptional educator is her ability

to connect one-on-one with individuals and explain on a deeply personal level why cancer awareness and cancer screenings are so essential."

Bowman doesn't mind sharing her stories of family loss and hopes that they motivate others to take action for themselves and their own families.

"When we had a breast and cervical project, I did pretty well to share the message and say, 'Hey, my stepmom ignored the signs. Take advantage of the opportunity,'" Bowman said. "I think I got a lot of people to sign up for testing because I shared my story. It was my calling to come to the O'Neal Cancer Center."

While Bowman is known to dispense her own style of awareness and

education, she said her energy comes from everyone around her and their shared vision of reducing cancer deaths and cancer disparities. "They trickle down energy, and I feed off positive energy," she said. "Any time they ask me to do something, I know it's a good project. I don't realize how much work I'm doing because there's so much energy surrounding it." Bowman said she never anticipated her path into cancer awareness and community outreach.

Bowman was trained as a social worker and spent years working with children and families. She found her niche at the Cancer Center, where her skills were used and expanded to include health advocacy. "In this field, it's like you are doing some social work because you refer them to resources and it's a personal conversation. It's about relationships," Bowman explained. "It's something that has to come from the heart. If you don't have a natural

heart for this, you can't teach it." Whether in person, on the phone or virtually, Bowman remains excited about her work to spread the message of healthier living and making sure everyone has both the information about and access to life-saving health care. "There's so much to be done. I don't have time to get tired now," Bowman said. "My dad always said that he would rest when he dies, and that's literally what he did. He would be proud of me."

# How much is 30 minutes worth?

**A lot.**

**Thirty minutes of daily physical activity can lower your risk of cancer and many other chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes.**

**Take 30 minutes for your health.**

(CDC.GOV)

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