

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS FUNDED TO ADDRESS BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER IN APPALACHIA

Breast and cervical cancer are largely preventable when detected early, yet there are thousands of women in Appalachia Ohio who have not enrolled in no-cost testing. Four community health workers (CHWs) funded by the Ohio Department of Health are going to change that.

Ohio University has been working with the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention Project (BCCP) over the past few years to improve the health of the people of this region. In August 2022, Dr. Melissa Thomas from the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine and Kerri Shaw from the OHIO Alliance for Population Health got a grant to fund two community health workers who are working on increasing the number of referrals for breast and cervical cancer screenings in Meigs, Vinton, Washington, Morgan and Athens counties.

The work of this project is so important because according to the Ohio Department of Health, all women are at some risk of getting breast cancer. The risk increases with age, and most women diagnosed with breast cancer are diagnosed after their 60s. Most people think that they are safer if there's no history of cancer in their families; however, studies show that most people diagnosed do not have a family history of breast cancer. The community health workers of this project want to educate and connect people to the resources BCCP provides to reduce the number of people getting diagnosed too late.

Getting screened regularly is the best way to fight breast cancer. When found at its earliest stage, breast cancer has over a 95 percent five-year survival rate, according to the Ohio Department of Health. For more information, please contact me at anacarolinaleon2@gmail.com or 740-593-2217.

Ana León
Community Health Worker