

Breast cancer celebration hosted by American Cancer Society at Heritage Senior Services

Written by Ivan Phifer, Staff Writer
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Heritage Park, one of the newly constructed housing developments, was the focus of a celebration for breast cancer survivors.

Hosted by The American Cancer Society and held at Heritage Parks Senior Services Center, 1014 4th Ave. N., the event took place Thursday, Oct. 18. The guest speaker for the event was Dr. Rahshana Price-Isuk.

In 2011, with support from the Wal-Mart Foundation National Giving Program, the American Cancer Society partnered with many federally qualified health centers and community-based organizations to implement a set of evidence-based, community-level interventions designed to address access to cancer screening in populations with an unequal burden of cancer throughout the country.

Price-Isuk is a family practice physician and medical director for the Neighborhood Health Source Clinic, formerly the Freemont Community Clinic. The center includes Heritage Senior Clinic, Central Avenue Clinic, and Sheridan Clinic.

"The goal of the presentation is to get men and women more knowledgeable about breast cancer," said Price-Isuk.

Staff of the American Cancer Society provided pamphlets with information regarding breast cancer information, risks, treatments and productive measure to reduce chances of growing.

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Price-Isuk warns that men can get breast cancer as well.

"It is very rare, but it can happen. If a man in your family has breast cancer, and that man is your father, that increases your risk. Any first degree relative increases personal risk of cancers," said Price-Isuk.

According to Price-Isuk, most breast cancers are in people older than age 55 and that African-American women do not receive screening as often as they should.

"All risk increases as we get older," said Price-Isuk. "The cancers genetically linked or inherited are those in younger women and were more than likely inherited in genes," she said.

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer, with skin cancer being the most common form of the disease.

Price-Isuk urges regular exams to increase the chances of early detection.

"Ignorance is not bliss," said Price-Isuk. "A lot of my patients will tell me 'I feel fine.' By the time you feel sick, it is later in the process and not too many options are available. Breast cancer screening reduces mortality. Breast cancer has excellent survival when detected early."

After Price-Isuk's presentation, breast cancer survivors provided a testimony regarding ordeals and experiences.

Ijnanya Amina Azequawe is a 4 year breast cancer survivor. Her cancer developed into colon cancer.

"My life changed," said Azequawe "I lost family, my husband abandoned me, (and) I lost my apartment and job. You can never give up on God. I am standing here today because he got me through the journey."

Azequawe was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer at Hennepin County Medical Center. "In 2009, the cells were (advanced) to colon cancer. I stayed in ICU for 11 days and my whole digestive system shut down," said Azequawe. She stayed in the hospital under close watch for seven weeks and required six different medicines.

Angie Atkinson, a social worker for Volunteers of America, found out she had breast cancer this past March.

"I got a mammogram because we found out my sister had (breast cancer) at age 36," said Atkinson. "I had to get special approval because I was not old enough. I had a baby, breastfed for a year and found a lump."

Given that the starting age for breast cancer mammograms are age 40, Atkinson needed permission to receive it.

She completed her chemotherapy as of last month.

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"Please get the exams. Don't think because your too young or too old that it cannot happen," said Atkinson.

Preceding the testimonies, survivors were recognized with carnations and a gift pack.

"We do not want communities of minority to fear coming to the doctor," said Price-Isuk. "We do not want to give you an illness, we want to prevent it, treat it, cure it and keep our communities healthy."

The Wal-Mart Foundation gave the American Cancer Society a \$2 million grant to support cancer education and screening projects in 41 different communities throughout the country.

For more information regarding the American Cancer Society, programs and services, call (651) 255-8180 or visit www.cancer.org .