



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## The Fight Against Breast Cancer Never Ends

PATRICK GALLIVAN | October 23, 2023

| ISSUE: **BREAST CANCER, BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**



October has long been designated as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a nationwide effort to focus attention on a disease that claims the lives of almost 2,600 women in New York every year. According to the State Health Department, over 15,000 women across NY will be diagnosed with this terrible disease in 2023. Nationwide it is estimated that one in eight women will develop breast cancer during their life, making it among the most-commonly diagnosed cancer in women. While men also get breast cancer, it is rare. About 150 men are diagnosed each year in New York State.

The numbers are so staggering that it is likely you know someone who has been touched by breast cancer. I will never forget the day my wife Mary Pat was diagnosed with a rare and highly aggressive form of the disease that affects only about five percent of women. It was a terrifying and confusing time for her and our entire family, but thanks to the excellent treatment she received, her courage in confronting her diagnosis, and the support of family and friends, Mary Pat's is doing well today. She is a breast cancer survivor, and thankfully, she is not alone.

Health experts know that increased awareness and early detection are key to treating and surviving the disease. The good news is there are more than 2.8 million breast cancer survivors in the United States today and death rates have been steadily declining thanks to better treatments and more accurate screenings that find cancers early when they are most treatable.

In the fight against breast cancer, it is important to understand some of the common risk factors. While the causes of breast cancer are not well understood, scientists agree that things such as genetics, age, lifestyle and lack of exercise can increase a person's risk of developing the disease. Annual mammograms are also suggested starting at age 40 for most women, and earlier for those at higher risk. By recognizing warning signs, the importance of regular self and physician-administered exams and treatment options, individuals are better prepared to confront a breast cancer diagnosis.

In Western New York, we are fortunate to have wonderful facilities and programs to treat breast cancer and to offer support to patients and their families, including [Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center](#) which has been named one of the best hospitals in the nation for cancer care by U.S. News & World Report. The [Breast Cancer Network of Western New York](#), the [Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester](#), and the [New York State Health Department](#) are also valuable resources for information and services.

Setting aside an entire month to help raise awareness about breast cancer is important, but the battle is a year-round effort. I urge you to learn more about the disease and share the information with your family and friends.