



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

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Early Detection Saves Lives

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, a nationwide effort to shine a light on this terrible disease and the importance of early detection. According to the New York State Health Department, each year over 15,000 women in New York are diagnosed with breast cancer and almost 2,600 women die from the disease. 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 very rare. About 150 men

are diagnosed with breast cancer each year in New York State.

The disease has also hit close to home for my family. About 8 years ago, my wife Mary Pat was diagnosed with a rare and highly aggressive form of breast cancer that affects only about five percent of women. I will never forget that day and the fear and confusion we felt upon hearing the news. Fortunately, we quickly realized that we were not alone in our fight against the disease. Thanks to skilled doctors and the support of family and friends, Mary Pat's treatment has been successful. She is a breast cancer survivor.

The good news is Mary Pat is not alone. In fact, 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 exercise can increase a person's risk of developing the disease. Increased awareness and early detection are also credited with helping survivor rates climb. 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 the Western New York Breast Cancer Resource Center at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (www.roswellpark.org); the Breast Cancer Network of Western New York (www.bcnwny.org); the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester (www.bccr.org) and the New York State Health Department (www.health.ny.gov).

Over the next month, you will see and hear a lot about breast cancer awareness. The message is important, but so is action. I urge you to learn more about the disease and share the information with family and friends now and throughout the year.