



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence Awareness

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| ISSUE: **BREAST CANCER AWARENESS, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS**



October in Western New York means the arrival of beautiful fall foliage. As we anticipate the change in seasons and watch the leaves turn from green to red, yellow and orange, I ask you to think about two colors not usually associated with fall, pink and purple.

Pink is the color for Breast Cancer Awareness month. Each year, hundreds of our fellow citizens are diagnosed with this terrible disease. About 9 years ago, the illness struck close to home for our family when my wife Mary Pat was diagnosed with a rare and highly aggressive form of breast cancer. It was a frightening and confusing time, but fortunately

with the right treatment and support from family friends Mary Pat recovered and continues to do well.

One in eight American women will develop invasive breast cancer in their lifetime – making it among the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women. Men can also get breast cancer. According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, nearly 41,000 people die from the disease every year, including more than 400 men. However, the outcome of this disease is not predetermined. In fact, there are more than 2.8 million breast cancer survivors in the United States today and death rates have been declining due to better treatments and more accurate screenings that find cancers early when they are most treatable.

While early detection is key, increased awareness is also critical. Understanding risk factors and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle are also important in the ongoing fight against the disease.

Numerous community organizations are available to help, 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) and Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester (www.bccr.org). Information is also available through the New York State Health Department (www.health.ny.gov or 1-866-442-CANCER).

The other color you will likely see throughout October is purple, which is in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness month. According to statistics, nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have suffered from some sort of domestic abuse whether physical, sexual, verbal or psychological. Too often, the victim is frightened to report the abuse, making domestic violence one of the most underreported crimes.

In WNY, help is available through the Family Justice Center of Erie County (www.fjcsafe.org). The agency provides services to victims and their children and assists in the prosecution of abusers. Assistance is also available through the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline at 1-800-942-6906.

By raising awareness of these important issues, we can ensure that family and friends know that they are not alone and that help is just a phone call away.