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June 8, 2020

Information for the Oklahoma Nursing & Health Care Professional

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# Oh Baby, Baby

## ***NICU at Integris Baptist Medical Center***

You will find Makala Benson, BSN, RNC-NIC at Integris Baptist Medical Center, giving extra TLC to the babies in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

From an early age, some people know exactly what they want to do when they grow up. They have a specific job in mind. That is the case for Makala Benson, BSN, RNC-NIC. Born and raised in Oklahoma City, OK, she knew that she wanted to help kids in a special way. She never took her focus off of that

goal.

You will find Makala at Integris Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City, OK, working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit where she has worked for the last seven years. "The NICU is such a specialized area of nursing and you either

See BABY Page 2

# PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT REMAINS A TOP CONCERN

## *ANA Testifies Before Pandemic Response Accountability Committee*

Access to a sufficient supply of PPE to care safely for patients with COVID-19 remains a top concern of nurses, according to new survey findings released today by the American Nurses Association (ANA).

According to the findings, almost half of nurses say they have experienced a shortage of PPE. The vast majority of nurses, 79 percent, said they are required or encouraged to reuse single-use PPE, like N95 masks, and 59 percent said this made them feel unsafe. Additionally, more nurses reported that their facilities are decontaminating N95 masks, another practice that nurses said does not make them feel safe.

ANA's latest survey offers fresh insights from nurses on the current state of the availability, reuse, and decontamination practices of personal protective equipment (PPE). More than 14,000 nurses responded to the survey, reflecting their experiences during the past two weeks. The nurses work in urban and rural areas and across a variety of health care settings, ranging from large urban and suburban hospitals to long-term and ambulatory care settings.

See PPE Page 2



PPE

Continued from Page 1

“While society is beginning to return to some sense of normalcy with states reopening, nurses are still working to prevent further spread of COVID-19 in our communities,” said ANA President Ernest J. Grant, PhD, RN, FAAN. “These findings are concerning and indicate persistent gaps in the supply and conservation of critical PPE. Further, it is evident that nurses are still having to use decontamination methods as a standard practice when this approach is intended to be a crisis capacity strategy. I’m disappointed that we have not reached a point in this pandemic where nurses can return to single use of PPE.”

Dr. Grant gave testimony today to the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, created by the CARES Act. The sentiments Dr. Grant shared in his testimony echoed these survey findings that demonstrate the critical need to improve the supply and distribution of PPE to protect nurses and other health care workers.

“We appreciate relief packages such as the CARES Act and the PPP

& Health Care Enhancement Act, which included billions to support providers and hospitals,” said Grant. “Now, we urge leaders to ensure that these funds are being distributed to health care facilities in a timely and equitable manner. We also recommend that the FDA research the effectiveness of various decontamination methods for the reuse of PPE. We must return to best practices as soon as possible so communities and health care systems can be restored.”

In calling for funds to support the mental health needs of nurses, Dr. Grant said, “The stress of inadequate supplies of personal protective equipment and caring for patients, family members, and self with a novel disease have created an enormous mental health burden on these providers which will likely take months, if not years, to rectify.”

According to reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of late May, more than 62,000 health care professionals had contracted COVID-19 and 291 had died from it. ANA has tracked reports of 156 nurses who have died due to COVID-19.

BABY

Continued from Page 1

love it or hate it, and I definitely love it,” she said. “First of all, I am a nurse because I know that I am making a difference in others’ lives. I love babies and children and have never worked with any other age group. When people ask me for advice about a medical concern about themselves, I always give them the same answer, Sorry, I don’t do big people. Ask me anything about babies and I can help,” she said with a smile.

Makala attended OSU-OKC for her Associates Degree and became a registered nurse in 2000. “I graduated in 2018 with my bachelor’s degree in Nurse Science from Southwestern Oklahoma State University. It actually took a long time to convince myself that I should go back to school and get my bachelor’s degree, but I am glad I did,” Makala said.

Graduating in December of 2000, Makala was hired by Deaconess to start working for them in January. “I worked there for sixteen years. There was a brief period when I was working at both places, Integris Baptist Medical Center and Deaconess Hospital at the same time,” Makala commented. “I am also a Clinical Adjunct Professor for OSU-OKC where I help educate nursing students during their clinical rotations at the hospitals. I have been teaching for two years now and have loved doing a different aspect of nursing. I enjoy teaching the students all of the interesting things that nursing has to offer.”

Makala tells about her first job as a registered nurse at Deaconess Hospital Birth Center in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. “At the time, they told us in nursing school that we would have to work a minimum of one year on a med-surge floor before we would be able to work in any specialty area. Well, I knew that I wanted to work with

babies and that I wouldn’t settle for anything else. So, I went and applied at Baptist Newborn Nursery, Baptist NICU and Deaconess NICU. Baptist wouldn’t take at the time because I didn’t have any experience. Deaconess on the other hand gave me a chance and they were willing to let me go straight into the NICU.”

“I always wanted to help kids in some way. My mother was a teacher and I thought that I would follow in her footsteps until one day; my grandma started telling me stories about how she was a Registered Nurse and worked in the newborn nursery with all the babies. I thought to myself, what an awesome job! You get to take care of babies all day! What better job could there be? That is when I knew for sure that I was going to take care of babies someday. I never gave it a second thought,” Makala said.

Asking Makala to describe herself, she replied, “I am a positive and passionate person, I am ambitious, enthusiastic, and driven. I am loving and thoughtful.” Makala was also honored to be chosen as Nurse of the Year for 2019-2020, along with being recognized as a Frontline Hero, 2020 on KFOR news.

How has the Coronavirus changed your life? “My life has slowed down regarding my family. My twelve year old daughter and nine year old son are both active in sports that had to be postponed. I have missed out on spending time with my friends and family, but I am a positive person and I look at it from a standpoint of being grateful. I am thankful that I am still able to work during the time and my husband has been able to work from home. Of course, there are extra precautions at work that every nurse has to take so they will not put anyone or their family members at risk.”

Summing up Makala’s life in one word, “Thankful,” she said.



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# CAREERS IN NURSING

## SERVING THE FRONT LINE: SSM HEALTH

by Vickie Jenkins - Writer/Photographer

When you visit SSM St. Anthony's Shawnee Hospital, you will be treated with the utmost care and respect. Among the highly qualified professionals, you will find Desirae Spoon, BSN, RN. "I chose nursing because I knew it would challenge me in every aspect of life; mentally, physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. I am able to make a positive impact in the lives that I interact with. I chose the emergency department because with every shift, I am learning something new and I get to interact with people of all ages and backgrounds. Every day, there is a new challenge in the E.R. that allows me to grow as a nurse. I consider it a real privilege to be a nurse, caring for others," Desirae explained.

Growing up in Shawnee/Tecumseh, Desirae attended East Central University in Ada, OK.

Desirae's first official job as an RN was as a public health nurse at the Absentee Shawnee Tribe Little Ax Health Center. "I first started working there in 2013 as a Patient Registration Clerk. I was so happy to get my foot in the door in the medical field. I applied for nursing school and was accepted that fall 2013 and began nursing classes that spring 2014. I was so grateful that my job was willing to work with me and my school schedule to allow me to still have an income and go to classes. That was a long drive from Shawnee/Tecumseh to Ada. I was thankful to be able to still have some income plus I was able to interact with experienced nurses and providers for any questions I had. From my last year of nursing school, I was moved from patient registration clerk to nurse intern with my dear friend Kristie McGuire in Public Health. Working with her and

seeing what the job entailed made me want to become a public health nurse. After finishing school and getting my license in 2016, I stayed as a public health nurse but realized I was missing out on bedside nursing with more hands on skills that I hadn't been able to experience. That is when I took the chance and applied at the ED dept. and got hired. I had been interested in the ER since during my last semester in my senior year."

"While I was in nursing school, there were several mentors that encouraged me along the way; Kristie McGuire and Joyce Gelino gave me tips and advice that helped me in big ways. In fact, I still go to them for advice every now and then," Desirae said with a smile.

Recently, Desirae was recognized on KFOR-TV news as one of the outstanding nurses that is serving on the frontline at SSM Health

St. Anthony's Shawnee Hospital. Asking Desirae how she would describe herself, she replied, "I am a person who is passionate, a great listener and I am always willing to learn. I put my family first in all my decisions in life and I think of others before myself. I thrive on communication and teamwork," she commented. "Without a team and encouragement, whether it's at work or my family, I wouldn't be where I am today without them," she added. "I like to stay positive about everything."

How has the Coronavirus changed your life? "Oh, it has changed my life in many ways," Desirae replied. "Mostly, I see changes with my husband, Deric and my three children. With staying home, the family is closer than ever before. I have a big family and we are used to seeing each other during holidays and

See SPOON Page 5

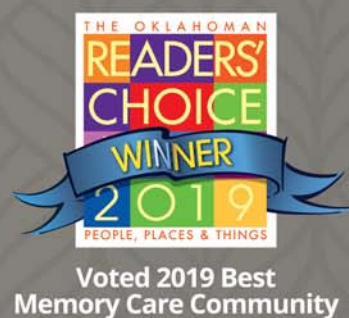


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Desirae Spoon, BSN, RN continues to serve on the frontline at SSM Health St. Anthony's Shawnee Hospital. With Spoon full of love and compassion, the patients' safety is her main concern.

**SPOON**

Continued from Page 4

birthdays. We have been keeping our distance but I can tell my kids are missing their friends and cousins. There has been an increase on FaceTime. I also noticed that my kids aren't arguing with each other as much as before," she said.

"With COVID-19, I take precautions at work. I bring extra clothes and an extra pair of shoes, in a sealed bag. I shower at the

hospital before I leave work. I leave my badge, markers, and stethoscope at work, in a sealed bag. I don't take anything home. I keep my work shoes in a bag to keep from contaminating anything in my car and a can of Lysol to spray my clothes, etc. Then, when I get home, I remove my clothes in the garage and head to the shower-again."

As a nurse, what word best describes your life. "That would be perseverance."



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# SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19

## COVID-19 Oklahoma Test Results

- As of this advisory, there are 7,205 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in Oklahoma.
- There is one additional death; it occurred on June 5.
- \*One in Tulsa County, a female in the 65 and older age group.
- There are 348 total deaths in the state.
- COVID-19 testing sites are open in multiple cities in Oklahoma as a result of a cross-county, city and state health system partnership. Visit this page for updated dates and locations.
- For more information, visit [coronavirus.health.ok.gov](https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov).

Confirmed Positive Cases	7,205
*Total Cumulative Negative Specimens to Date (As of 6/5)	214,598
*Total Cumulative Number of Specimens to Date (As of 6/5)	223,245
**Currently Hospitalized (As of 6/5)	158
Total Cumulative Hospitalizations	1,039
Deaths in the Past 24 hours	0
Total Cumulative Deaths	348

\*The total includes laboratory information provided to OSDH at the time of the report. Total counts may not reflect unique individuals.

\*\*This number is a combination of hospitalized positive cases and hospitalized persons under investigation, as reported by hospitals at the time of the report. The data reflect a change in calculation and should not be compared to prior data.

Data Source: Acute Disease Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. \*As of 2020-06-08 at 7:00 a.m.

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# AGS Student Excelling at Local Hospital

*Jennifer Butler has always been committed to making a difference in people's lives through kindness, compassion, and quality care.*

She's currently working on completing her BSN degree through Oklahoma Wesleyan's Adult and Graduate Studies program. At the same time, Butler is working at Jane Phillip's Medical Center, in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and is looking forward to a management position with the nursing staff after her graduation this December. It's one of many achievements in Butler's nursing career, which she says began when she was very young.

Her family, ironically, was not made up of healthcare providers, save for one grandmother who worked as a nursing assistant. Most of Butler's family were bankers, but that profession never held much appeal for Jennifer. For her, it was always nursing.

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**"I knew that I wanted to do something in ministry and something helping people," she said. "Something just always drew me to nursing."**

---

There was also an aspect of home-town pride in Butler's decision, as she grew up in Bartlesville and felt a strong calling to minister to its people. "I love our community, so I want to make a difference in the people who need healthcare in [it]."

Butler got her CNA certification at 16, and she's

never looked back, eventually taking classes at Roger's State University to earn her RN. After some work at St. John's in Tulsa to get some experience at a bigger facility—and spending some time with an agency as a travel nurse—Butler felt it was time to come home, taking a position with Jane Phillips.

When she was offered a chance to take on a supervisory role, Butler felt a calling in a slightly different direction: administration. She currently works as a clinical supervisor, helping to organize the nursing staff and to provide assistance as needed through the hospital. Butler knew that this was a fit for her skill-set and giftedness, and she wanted to advance further. Not only that, but her bosses had her tapped for a management position. She would need to continue her education.

## One Step at a Time

Enter OKWU and its extensive AGS program. Butler received information about the program from Kelli Croucher, AGS Enrollment Services Manager, and enrolled in courses. Between the scholarships she was able to receive from OKWU and the education stipends Butler received from her work, she will graduate this December completely debt-free.

"We came out free and clear. Bachelor's degree for free," Butler said. "It really opened that door for me to climb up the ladder."

And this is well-deserved. "Everything Jennifer puts her hand to is done with excellence," Croucher said. "Jennifer has never wavered in her commitment to her family, her career or her education, bringing several



fellow nurses along with her to complete their BSN as well."

As already mentioned, the best part of nursing for Butler is her ability to make an impact on someone's hospital experience for the better.

---

**"Smiles are contagious. Being kind is contagious. The best thing about being a nurse is spreading kindness and showing**

---

"The more compassion you show, the more that others show."

Long term, she plans to continue her education, preferably

at OKWU. But for now, she plans to continue in that singular mission: to show simple kindness, even as she continues climbing the ladder in administration. "I will always find a way to be on the floor," she said.

Butler doesn't worry about the future, and that's her advice to other students—especially those students in the AGS program who are juggling their career and their education. "Just take it one step at a time," she said. "One step at a time."

For more information visit [www.okwu.edu](http://www.okwu.edu).



# OMRF uncovers clues for higher lupus risk in African Americans

African Americans are roughly five times more likely to suffer from the autoimmune disease lupus as European Americans.

New research from the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation may finally help answer why.

A recent study conducted at the Oklahoma City-based nonprofit is taking physicians closer to understanding the immune system features that result in higher lupus rates in African-American patients, potentially paving the way for better preventive treatment options. The results appear in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

Lupus is a devastating autoimmune disease that occurs when the immune system becomes unbalanced, leading to the development of antibodies and chronic inflammation that damage the body's organs and tissues.

According to the Lupus Foundation of America, more than 1.5 million Americans suffer from the disease. Lupus primarily strikes women, but beyond that, it even more disproportionately affects certain minority groups, including African Americans.

OMRF Vice President of Clinical Affairs Judith James, M.D., Ph.D., and scientist Joel Guthridge, Ph.D., led a team of OMRF researchers who compared immune profiles of European-American and African-American study volunteers. Some of the participants had lupus, some were

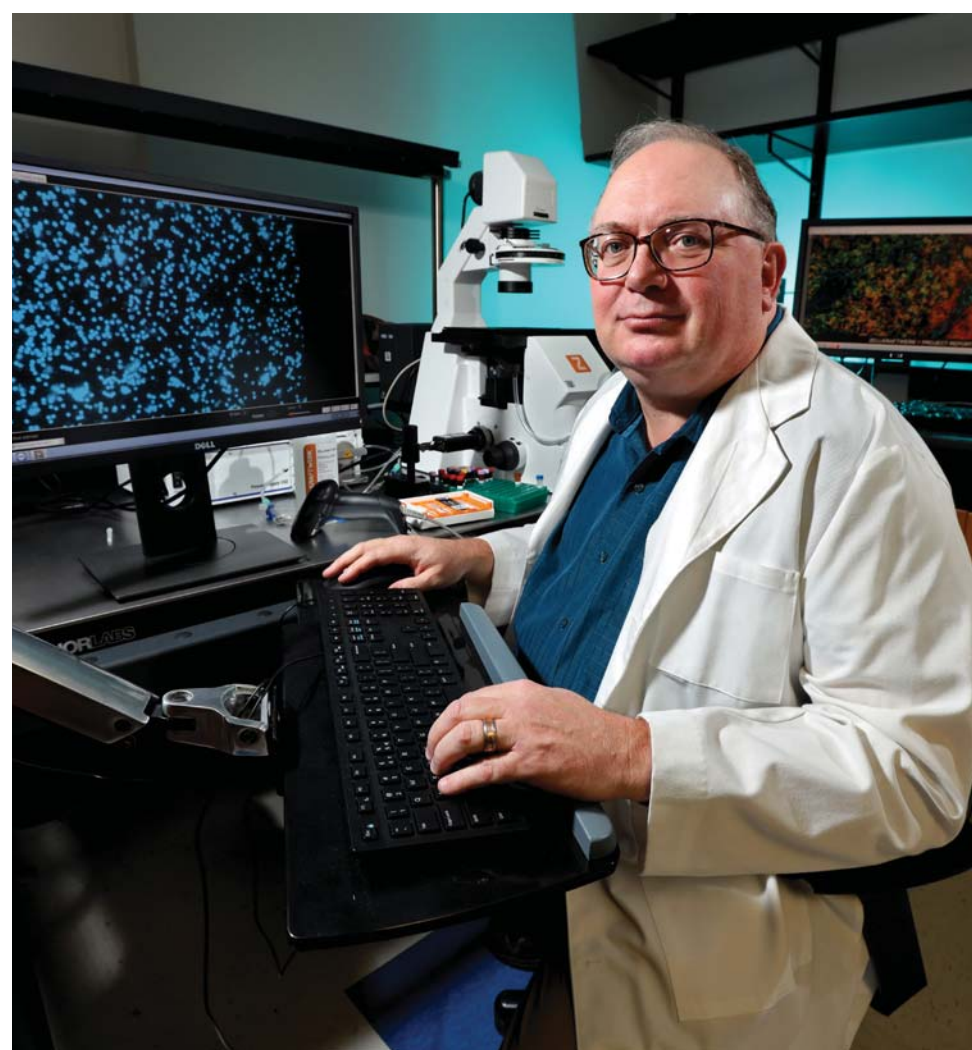
healthy controls, and some had blood markers of lupus without disease symptoms.

"We are really interested in the period of time before patients develop lupus, and we investigate the mechanisms that drive autoimmune disease before symptoms are evident," said OMRF scientist Samantha Slight-Webb, Ph.D., the lead author on the new study. "After taking a very comprehensive approach, we discovered a key difference between European-American and African-American participants."

The research revealed that at-risk European-American participants had a suppressed immune response—including fewer T cells, which are known to be important in lupus. At-risk African-American participants, however, already had elevated activation markers in T cells.

"We can see that as a reason African-Americans are more likely to transition into disease, because this indicates a higher inflammatory immune response," said Slight-Webb.

"Understanding regulatory mechanisms that keep abnormal immune systems in check and individuals without clinical disease is critical," said James, who holds the Lou C. Kerr Endowed Chair in Biomedical Research at OMRF. "This information will be key as we work to decipher new treatments or re-purpose available therapies to better treat or prevent lupus and related autoimmune diseases."



Working in partnership with OU and the biotechnology company Fluidigm, OMRF's Dr. Joel Guthridge devised a way to enhance Oklahoma's coronavirus testing capacity.

The findings provided the first-ever description of protective immune profiles in T cells before disease symptoms occur that defend some individuals from developing lupus or other autoimmune condition.

"Identifying this protective T-cell response could be pivotal in identifying therapeutic targets and potential drugs that may prevent people from transitioning into the disease," said Slight-Webb. "Also, it would help us look at drugs—and dosages—differently based on ethnicity to improve outcomes for African-American patients, who are most at highest risk for severe disease."

Other OMRF scientists who contributed to the findings were Miles Smith, Ph.D., Aleksandra Bylinska, Susan Macwana, Carla Guthridge, Ph.D., Rufe Lu, M.D., Ph.D., Joan

Merrill, M.D., Eliza Chakravarty, M.D., Cristina Arriens, M.D., and Melissa Munroe, M.D., Ph.D. This study was performed in collaboration with scientists from Stanford University, including P.J. Utz, M.D. and Holden Maeker, Ph.D.

The work was funded by grants from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (U19AI082714, U19AI082719, U01AI101934, UM1AI44292, T32AI007633), the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (P30AR073750), and the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (U54GM104938, P30GM103510). It was conceived through interactions of the NIAID Autoimmunity Centers of Excellence and NIAID Cooperative Working Group on Autoimmune Disease Prevention programs.

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# NURSE TALK

*I would be a parrot because I like to talk!*



Emma Heinen, RN

*I would choose a blue jay because I am very protective.*



Heather Warfel, RN

*If you were a bird, what kind of bird would you be and why?*



Stephenson  
Cancer  
Center

*I would be a canary because I like to sing!*



Victoria Saunders,  
RN

*I would like to be an eagle. I would soar high.*



Janna Weatner, RN

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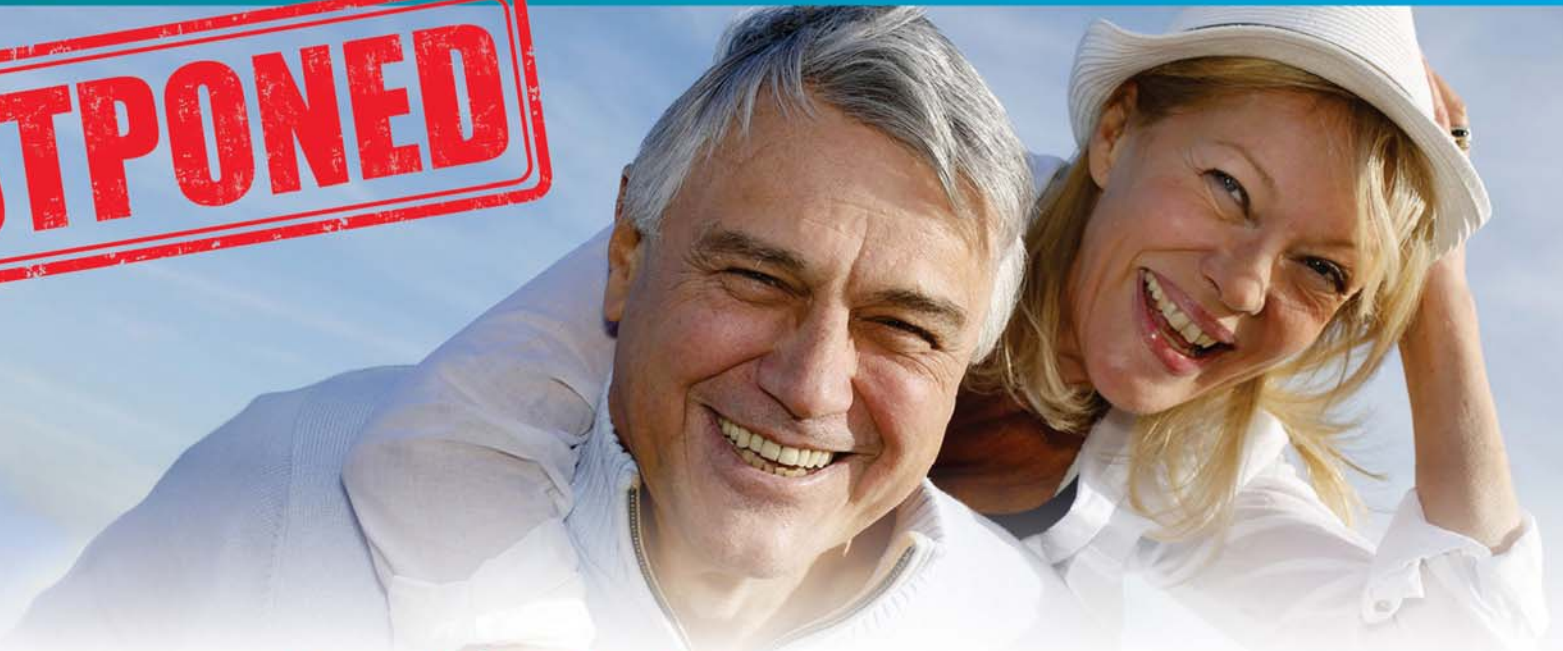
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# Local Woman Celebrates National Cancer Survivor's Day as a 34-year Survivor

Times were different in 1986—music, politics, fashion. Cancer treatment was different too. It was late in the year, just before Christmas, when Kathy Williams had a mastectomy. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and a left radical mastectomy was the recommended procedure.

"I had a lot of conversations in my mind," she said. "What would happen if I wasn't around to watch my kids grow up? There were so many thoughts, but I knew I had some time to get things done before my follow-up appointments in January."

Now 34 years later, Williams is still cancer free. On Sunday, June 7, she will join celebrations across the country for National Cancer Survivor's Day.

"The treatment for breast cancer has evolved over the years, so when you think about breast cancer 34 years ago, doctor's recommendations

were much different than now," she said. "My oncologist did not recommend chemo; rather, I would have regular checkups and monitor my blood work. He was concerned about the possibility of cancer in my right breast. So, after much discussion, I chose the preventative method of another mastectomy. I feel blessed I am now cancer free."

The American Cancer Society of Oklahoma has been with Williams on each step of her cancer journey and celebrates with her and so many others. "Shortly after my surgery I was visited in the hospital by an American Cancer Society volunteer," she said. "I was so hopeful after her visit that I decided cancer will not beat me. I thought if she can survive, then I can too. I had four children and I planned on seeing them grow up, graduate, get married and have children. I knew there was a light behind the shadow of cancer, and I was going to fight the battle and

win." Today, Williams is a member of the ACS area Board of Directors and has a new role as ambassador for the Society's "ResearchHERS" campaign.

"I continue volunteering with the American Cancer Society in several different ways," she said. "ResearchHERS brings together some of our community's female leaders to raise funds that will fuel the work of women scientists right here in Oklahoma. Research dollars make a difference in surgeries, treatment and quality of life. If it wasn't for the funds raised, advancements in surgery and treatment would not change. Those dollars make a difference to those being diagnosed with cancer today."

This spring, the American Cancer Society suffered a significant financial impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But Williams believes the organization will emerge stronger.

"When I was in the hospital back in 1986, that ACS volunteer who



visited me gave me so much hope," she said. "She gave me hope that I wasn't sure was even within my reach. She was gardening, playing golf, enjoying family. I remember thinking if she was cancer free, then I could be as well. And here I am, cancer free. The American Cancer Society does such great work on so many fronts. Every person can help, and every dollar makes a difference. You can give someone like me the hope they need to survive."

Additional information about the American Cancer Society can be found at [www.Cancer.org](http://www.Cancer.org) or via phone at 1-800-227-2345



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But here's the big surprise. The Maddoxes not only receive help from United Way agencies, they find room in a budget stretched to its limit and they give to the United Way. **Can you?**

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