Chapter 4: Sample Activities

You are passionate about cancer education and want to inform the educational employees in your school, but you just don't have the time. The following activities have actually been implemented by school employees like you! They are short and easy to accomplish, yet effective in reaching a great number of people. Choose activities that you and your team think are achievable.

You might choose to start small by implementing activities in one or a few school buildings. After you have achieved success, you might then expand into the entire school district. You might also consider conducting activities at specific Local or State Education Associate functions, or to coincide with nationally designated awareness programs such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. Use one of these ideas or several to create your own local program. **Appendix 1** includes a case study of successful programs implemented by school employees in South Dakota.

The following section contains detailed descriptions of suggested activities, but you are in no way limited to these suggestions. All of the sample programs are meant as a tool to help you and your teammates be creative and come up with ideas that fit the needs of your specific community. Feel free to change or adapt these strategies or to use them "as is." The sky is the limit!

10 minute activities:

- Beads for Life
- Bosom Buddies
- Breast Self-Exam Models
- Free Materials
- Pink Ribbon Campaign

1 hour activities:

- Paint it Pink
- Survivors' Poster
- Victorian Tea
- Women's Night Out

Additional Sample Activities:

- School Nurse InService
- Well Woman Series
- Free-For-All
- Mobile Mammography
- Tell-A-Friend
- Lay Health Advisors
- First Fridays, Third Thursdays
- Insurance Benefits

Beads For Life **Favorite**

Time: 10 minutes

Cost: Approximately $1-1.50 per necklace

Goal: To increase the awareness for breast screenings through directly experiencing the result of frequent examination

Materials:
Photocopies of Beads for Life explanation **(Appendix 2)**
Beads*: 38mm, 25mm, 16mm, 10mm, and 3mm
String for necklace

Procedure: By far one of the most popular Project REACH activities, Beads for Life provides the participants a visual and tactile experience of what lumps look and feel like when screening examinations are delayed versus when practiced regularly. Although there is some cost associated with it, the response is so overwhelming that you will be glad you invested in the materials!

Appendix 2 contains the Beads for Life handout explaining what each size bead represents. A little prep time is needed for this exercise because photocopies (on pink paper, if possible!) and bags should be assembled. Bags must contain the following:

- Necklace string, approximately 20 inches in length
- **1** 38mm bead
- **2** 25mm beads
- **2** 16mm beads
- **2** 10mm beads
- **2** 3mm beads.

To begin, pass out a bag of materials to each participant without the explanation. Have them guess what the contents represent, then ask them to raise their hands if they practice monthly breast self-exam. Next ask who receives annual clinical breast exams and mammograms. As you distribute the explanation, tell them that the activity they are about to complete will visually show them the importance of all three types of screenings.

> *"While at a conference, I participated in the Beads for Life activity and wore the necklace for the rest of the weekend. So many people came up to me and asked what I was wearing…it gave me the opportunity to teach others about the need for early detection. In fact, I still have it hanging in my office and get questions about it all the time."*
>
> *Bob Walsh*
> *NEA Director*

Explain that the beads represent different size lumps that can be found within the breast. As you give the participants the explanations, ask them to remove the contents of the bag and set them on the table. First begin by stringing the 38 mm bead. Next, a 25 mm bead should be placed on either side of the 38 mm. As you continue stringing beads until you reach the end, talk about which screening habits are associated with the appropriate size and refer them to the handout as a resource.

Once the necklace is complete, have the participants place them over their heads and close their eyes. Give them a few seconds to palpate each bead and think about its meaning. Start with the biggest and move all the way to the very smallest bead, while explaining the importance of breast self-examination, clinical breast examination, and mammography. Emphasize that men get breast cancer as well as women. Often a man can detect a lump in the breast of his partner before she does. Encourage the women and men to wear the necklaces for the rest of day and to explain its message to others!

Some companies sell assembled Beads for Life necklaces for approximately $5. However, by purchasing each size bead in bulk from your local craft store, you can often receive a discounted rate or even have them donated. In the past, teams have also been able to order professionally stained beads in various colors through online distributors such as BJ Craft Supplies (http://www.bjcraftsupplies.com/beads-wood1.htm).* **Appendix 2 *contains an application for the NEA HIN Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund, which can be used to purchase these and other cancer education materials.*

*** Past workshops have really loved this activity!*

Bosom Buddies Contract

Time: 10 minutes

Cost: Cost of photocopies

Goal: To increase breast self-examination and regular screenings through peer support

Materials:
Photocopies of Buddy Contract (included in **Appendix 2**)

Procedure: By signing a written pledge called a "Buddy Contract," two school colleagues commit to reminding each other to schedule yearly screenings for breast and cervical cancer and to practice monthly breast self-examination. Contracts can be copied, placed in sealed envelopes and then distributed via Association building representatives in school employees' mailboxes. Consider the importance of reaching out to ESP employees and any other staff member who may not have a personal mailbox.

Alternatively, school nurses might be recruited to distribute copies of the contract. Think about other ways to disseminate contracts and to supplement this activity with posters placed in the faculty lounges or faculty restrooms promoting the use of Buddy Contracts.

"I have signed a contract with one of my co-workers from school. Every year, we get our mammograms on the same day and then go get manicures. It's a great way to bond and to take care of yourself!"

Mary Williams

Breast Self-Examination (BSE) Models

Time: 10 minutes

Cost: Free!

Goal: To increase breast self-examination and screening utilization through the "teach by touch" method

Materials:
Breast Cancer Model with Lumps*
Cancer Education Materials

"I cannot believe how hard I actually had to press to be able to feel the lumps. I only found 2 lumps before looking at the diagram which showed there were actually 5! I think I now know what to look for during a breast self-exam."

Jennie Lane

Procedure: You can often acquire synthetic breast models from your local health department as well as Breast Self-Examination instructions and general breast cancer facts and information. By using a model, women **and men** are able to learn the feel of five different lumps that simulate tumors. It is also very important to provide explanatory information pamphlets with such an activity. Appropriate information includes breast cancer risk factors, BSE instructions, screening guidelines, and facts on BSE and mammography.

By establishing a contact with your health department or local chapter of the American Cancer Society, you invite the opportunity for future collaborations. Posters, mailbox inserts, announcements, and other forms of communication should all be used to reach various types of educational employees.

** Breast models can be ordered through Nasco Hands-on-Health at www.eNASCO.com or 800-558-9595. The cost for a set of three (varying in size) is $210 and $90 for a single model. You can purchase these and other cancer education materials through the NEA HIN Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund. An application and details can be found in* ***Appendix 2****.*

FREE Education Materials **Favorite**

Time: 10 minutes

Cost: Free!

Goal: To raise breast and cervical health awareness through various forms of early detection and education resources

Materials:

Your Personal Health Calendar - Based on the school year, this monthly pocket calendar includes basic breast and cervical cancer information as well as monthly breast self exam reminder stickers.

Early Detection is Your Best Protection - A bookmark that outlines American Cancer Society recommended screening guidelines on one side and on the other, various tumor sizes representing what can be found in the breast for different levels of screening.

Breast/Testicular Self-Exam Shower Cards - For both females and males, this plastic card hangs in the shower and describes the proper way to perform a breast self exam and testicular self exam.

Cancer Information Pamphlets - Brochures on various types of cancers can be obtained through your local health department and the American Cancer Society.

"I am always amazed at how many order requests I receive each year for our education materials. We print over 50,000 calendars and shower cards and seem to distribute them in no time at all. Most people place a bulk order so that they can distribute them throughout their schools."

Danielle Rentz
Project Coordinator

Procedure: Free materials are a great way to spread the word of early detection. By placing information in the teacher's lounge, in mailboxes, and throughout the school, many women and men can be reached with little effort. Calendars, bookmarks, and shower cards can be ordered through NEA HIN via email (**info@neahin.org**) or phone at 800-718-8387. Other organizations, such as the American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute also provide information free of charge. Phone numbers and websites for cancer-related organizations can be found in **Appendix 1**.

*** Past workshops have really loved this activity.*

Paint it Pink

Time: 10 minutes

Cost: Approximately $15-20, depending on number

Goal: To raise breast cancer awareness through a Pink Ribbon Campaign

Materials:
Pink Ribbons

Procedure: For minimal cost, pink ribbons can either be made or purchased and distributed to all educational employees. Many schools have combined this activity with a denim day (proceeds from which can pay for the small cost associated with the ribbons) or distribution of various cancer education materials.

Pass them out at staff meetings, in the teacher's lounge, and to anyone you see. Ask participants to wear them as a reminder to practice regular screening utilization and monthly breast self-examination. By the end of the day, have the school painted pink!

"Pink ribbons are a very visible and easy source of spreading the awareness message. We purchased pink ribbon stickers and distributed them to everyone in the school... even the students got involved."

Sarah Wilson

Ribbon of Hope

Time: 45 minutes preparation

Cost: Free to minimal, depending on contributions from school and photographer

Goal: To use the symbol of a pink ribbon to demonstrate that everyone is affected by cancer

Materials:
Pink paper cut in half (or quartered)
Polaroid camera and film
Tape
Free handouts and cancer information

Procedure: Most people know that the pink ribbon is associated with breast cancer awareness. This activity uses that symbol and makes a more bold statement by saying that we are the face of cancer…of hope, of survivorship, of prevention, and of education.

When this activity was performed in Brookings, SD it was free because they were able to use pink paper from the school and get original school photos from the photographer. If your school and photographer are not as cooperative, follow these easy steps to get the same effect.

> *"I feel that some of the best things we did were the panel of survivors, the [Beads for Life] necklaces, and the wall arrangement of our staff's photos on pink paper in the shape of the ribbon. We continue to stuff their mailboxes with pertinent information and have already ordered the pink ribbons to distribute this October."*
>
> *Benda Berseth*

Begin by taking pictures of both male and female educational employees throughout your school. Once you have everyone's picture, tape them onto the pink pieces of paper. Find a large wall in the teacher's lounge or another highly trafficked area in the school and tape to the wall the pink paper (with the photos) in the shape of a ribbon. Brookings used the middle of the ribbon to display breast cancer information, but you may also distribute the information in mailboxes and throughout the teacher's lounge. And don't forget to include priority populations in your activity!

Survivors' Poster

Time: 1 hour

Cost: Cost of color photocopies

Goal: To utilize cancer survivors in the school community as a means of promoting early detection through regular screenings

Materials:
Camera and Film
Cancer Survivors
Paper

Procedure: This activity is short, yet powerful, because it puts a "face" on cancer. The first step is to distribute a flyer to all school employees, including priority populations, asking for cancer survivors to have their picture taken for a cancer education poster. It is up to you whether you want to include all survivors, or only of a particular cancer type.

Establish a meeting time and place for the survivors to gather. You will want a location that is conducive to taking a photograph. You can decide the quality of the picture by either using a regular/digital camera, or possibly asking a professional to volunteer his time.

> *"I am so pleased that these people willingly came forward to be included in this celebration photo. I have heard many positive responses from individuals who [saw it]. A number of them have indicated that this message served as a motivational tool in seeking personal health consultation."*
>
> *Sandra Schlenker*

Once the picture is taken and processed, photocopy it and hang it throughout the school. You can add facts and statistics or whatever additional information you would like. Because you will be raising awareness, it will be beneficial to have additional cancer materials available in the teacher's lounge and other staff gathering spaces. The American Cancer Society produces pamphlets, Cancer Facts for Men and Cancer Facts for Women, that are distributed free of charge. See **Appendix 1** for contact information.

Victorian Tea

Time: 1-2 hours

Cost: Minimal if you get donations!

Goal: To use the power of a social event and community involvement to educate women about breast and cervical cancer and the need for early detection and treatment

Materials:
Expert Speaker
Cancer Information
Food and drinks
Decorations

Procedure: Because this activity is somewhat more involved, you should start by presenting the idea to your Administration for permission. Once permission has been granted, you can begin preparing for the event.

Visit local doctors' offices, hospitals, and grocery stores to ask for donations such as education materials, free mammograms, drinks, and food. Restaurants and local shops will also make donations that can be raffled off during the event or offered as door prizes. A local party company may even offer free decorations for the event. You won't know until you ask!

Arrange a speaker through a hospital, your local health department or chapter of the American Cancer Society. A good presenter will include cancer information such as risk factors, prevention, self-examination, and treatment. Having a local health person available for questions will allow you to link your audience with local services and resources.

> *"We started out by distributing shower cards and doing the Beads for Life activity, then we decided to do a Tea. It was such a huge success. We had both a male and female breast cancer survivor; donations of free mammograms, Pap tests, food, and drink; and the high school provided music. It wasn't even too expensive because of the Vivian Roy Bowser grant we received from HIN. Everyone loved it!"*
>
> *Sheila Powell*

In addition to an expert speaker, you may also seek out a breast cancer survivor to add a more human touch to the need for education and prevention. Although speakers can provide a wealth of information in terms of experience and statistics, hands-on activities can keep your audience involved. By including breast models, the Beads for Life exercise, and/or a form of entertainment (such as the high school choir) your audience will stay active and interested in the event.

Remember that the Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund is a great way to cover any expenses that may occur throughout your event. See **Appendix 2** for more details.

Women's Night Out

Time: 1-2 hours

Cost: Depends on the extent of the event and the amount of donations. Can range from minimal to $5-$10 per person

Goal: To create an environment of camaraderie, connection and caring which encourages women to get regular screenings for breast and cervical cancer

Materials:
Dinner
Decorations
Door Prizes
Speaker
Education Materials
Beads for Life

Procedure: As with any event that requires detailed planning, it is often beneficial to work as a group. Once you have a few volunteers, divide the workload. Assign groups to complete the following tasks:

1. arrange a speaker from the local health department or American Cancer Society,
2. design an invitation and program (requesting the women to RSVP will help you gauge how much food you will need for the event),
3. order dinner and dessert, and
4. gather donations from local vendors.

Appendix 2 contains a sample speaker letter and outlines important points to be addressed during a cancer presentation. Make sure you give the speaker all the details of the event, ranging from how many will be in attendance to exactly when she will be speaking. Also request that the speaker bring various handouts and pamphlets for your dinner guests.

> *"When we did this event for our community, the fellowship hall was donated by a local church and various businesses did the same. We limited attendance to 100 women so that we could remain within our budget. We paid the school food services to do a potato bar and we also got cheesecake for dessert. Everyone seemed to enjoy having time to relax and at the end of the night we even got donations!"*
>
> *Becky Luecke*

In addition to food and drink, it is nice to have an interactive activity. The Beads for Life (outlined in this chapter as a 10 minute activity) requires some prep work, but women really enjoy the activity and always give great feedback.

Also remember that when you are planning an event, having a cancer survivor, in addition to an expert speaker, provides a human touch. If you know someone from your school community who would be willing to participate, ask that she share her personal story with the group as a means of promoting early detection and regular screenings.

Remember that the Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund (**Appendix 2**) is a great way to cover any expenses that may occur throughout your event.

Additional Sample Activities

School Nurse InService

Because they are an integral part of the school staff, school nurses can provide a vital link in encouraging women to obtain regular screenings and in delivering this important message. Although some nurses will be familiar with up-to-date aspects of early detection for breast and cervical cancer, others may need a "refresher" course. Ask the School Health Services staff to help you identify nurses who might be interested in participating. Training components might include:

- a review of breast and cervical cancer early detection guidelines,
- overview of Pap tests, mammography, clinical breast exams, and instruction in breast self-examination,
- overview of treatment options for breast and cervical cancer, and/or
- presentations on community resources and availability of early detection screening and follow-up treatment, especially services targeting income-eligible, uninsured or underinsured women.

Well Woman Series

The quality of our health and our lives depends on a variety of interdependent factors making it difficult to address any one health issue without addressing or acknowledging other issues. In addition to planning one-time or on-going events targeting breast and cervical cancer early detection screening, these topics can be incorporated into a series of workshops or seminars on women's health issues. Offer take-home pamphlets and materials (see **Appendix 1** for Key Cancer Resources) that participants can share with their friends and colleagues who are not in attendance.

"Free-For-All"

School employees often state that one of the major barriers to getting mammograms, clinical breast exams, and Pap tests is the lack of time available in their busy workday schedules. A woman may need as many as three separate medical appointments in order to follow recommended early detection screening guidelines. With a few hours of free leave a year to work with, advance planning, and the comfort of knowing your school administration supports you, screening appointments could easily be scheduled for either the beginning or the end of a workday. Contact you Association UniServ staff for help in securing "free" leave to be used toward preventive screening appointments:

- request that your Superintendent consider an annual plan that would allow each employee six hours of "free early detection time,"
- encourage your local Association to negotiate for "free" time for early detection screening as part of their collective bargaining and negotiations, and/or
- solicit support for this type of arrangement from the principal of the school(s) where you work.

Your UniServ staff will help work out the many details in this type of arrangement such as who will keep track of and approve individual requests for leave, who will be responsible for arranging substitute coverage, how far in advance employees need to request leave, and other issues.

Using Mobile Mammography

Many radiology facilities across the country operate FDA-approved mammography units that are housed in mobile vans. These facilities are then able to send the van to various locations in their region to provide screening mammograms. This could be particularly useful in rural communities where getting to a mammography facility may require a great deal of travel time, thus presenting further screening barriers to public school employees. However, organizing a mobile mammography event can be logistically demanding. Here are some suggestions:

Additional Sample Activities

- Enlist the help of organizations and individuals such as those listed in **Chapter 1** and **Appendix 1**. They can help identify quality mobile mammography services, and perhaps similar services or opportunities for cervical cancer screening.
- Work closely with representatives of the school district and health insurance companies to identify and answer cost, billing, and co-payment questions, and to help complete the necessary paperwork. Contact your UniServ staff for help.
- Ask for assistance from your health department in identifying screening and follow-up treatment options for individuals who may not have insurance or a regular physician, and for individuals eligible for no or low-cost screenings.

American Cancer Society's Tell-a-Friend Program

(www.cancer.org)

Many local chapters of the American Cancer Society have implemented this program to train women to be peer educators by telling their friends about the importance of breast and cervical cancer early detection. Ask your local ACS chapter if this program is available. Women in your school district can learn to be early detection advocates through this program.

Lay Health Advisors

Many local health departments have developed community "Lay Health Advisor" programs to train women to be peer health educators in their community. Ask your local health department if they have a program like this, and if not, ask them to start one (or offer to assist in its development).

"First Fridays, Third Thursdays"

Identify a school nurse and/or community clinician who are willing to make themselves available in your school building on the same day of every month to serve as an on-site resource person and to encourage school employees to practice early detection screening.

Identifying Insurance Benefits

Develop a comprehensive fact sheet on the breast and cervical cancer screening benefits offered by the health insurance plans for the school employees in your district. Include information such as the types of screening and follow-up services the insurers cover, what the deductibles and co-pays are, where to go for no or low-cost mammograms, and the eligibility requirements. Contact your UniServ representative for help.